

THIS THESIS focuses on three English writers from the first half of this century—Leonard Woolf, E. J. Thompson, and E. M. Forster—and presents their ideas and rhetorical strategies as precursors to the postcolonialism of a later generation. The major emphasis is on the anxiety felt by these English individuals over the imperial project in India, over its political and cultural morality. An equally important question is how these writers came to express such moral anxieties in their writing, and thus how their personal reservations came to be communicated at larger levels, social and rhetorical. Underlying all this is an inquiry into how their work contributed over time to changes in the social, political, and cultural ideology of imperialism, changes which ultimately culminated in its disintegration. Thus the central argument is that the work of such writers helped prepare the way for the early ideological and rhetorical developments in English writing, both in Britain and in India, which have evolved over time into postcolonialism.

Each chapter involves parallel examinations of anxiety and rhetoric; while anxiety is seen to operate behind texts as a state of mind occupying each author, various rhetorical strategies from within texts are examined as devices for communicating, accommodating, and eventually moving beyond anxiety. This development—from Woolf's loss of voice, through Thompson's search for voice, and to Forster's evolution beyond voice—comprises an attitudinal and rhetorical trajectory leading specifically to postcolonialism. After an Introduction situating various inspirations for the thesis in theoretical writings of Edward Said, Georg Lukács, Raymond Williams, Harold Bloom, and Sara Suleri, chapters follow on each of the three writers. Woolf's fiction represents a self-conscious disaffection with the realist and sentimental rhetoric of narrative fiction, a loss of creative energy caused by anxieties over the inherited genre. Thompson's strong sense of inherited guilt conditions a momentum toward an atonement which will reconceive the rhetoric of English India but which he does not feel himself in a position to make on his own. Forster's infringements upon the rhetoric of realism represent an attempt to move beyond the potential resignation and isolation of critical realism, with a vision of the possibility of engagement in a world community and with strong hopes for such a utopia, even though its consummation is consistently deferred. Similarly, his alignments to some of the innovations of modernism, and his own idiosyncratic rhetorical strategies are all determined by a particular imagination of a postcolonial future. All three of these figures write for the future without ever representing what its shape might be, yet always implying that it will be a postcolonial one. In this imagining, they precede the critical and creative writing of today which endeavors to consummate that imagining, and consequently stand before postcolonialism as precursors.

University of Cambridge

Faculty of English

# Precursors to Postcolonialism

**Leonard Woolf, E. J. Thompson**

and

**E. M. Forster**

and the Rhetoric of English India



**ROBERT BAKER PEGRAM HARRISON**

CORPUS CHRISTI COLLEGE

A Thesis  
submitted for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

23 November 1995  
Thanksgiving Day



This thesis does not exceed the regulation length, including footnotes,  
references and appendices but excluding the bibliography.

It is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the  
result of work done in collaboration.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "P. H. Harned". The signature is written in dark ink on a light background.

# Table of Contents

---

Preface and Acknowledgments	i
Abbreviations	iii
<b>1. Introduction</b>	
1. Thesis and Methodology	1
2. Theoretical Inspirations	21
<b>2. Leonard Woolf: Rhetoric of Anxiety</b>	
1. Realism and Rationalism	30
2. Rhetoric and Anxiety	39
3. Realism and Sentiment	44
4. Anxious Rhetoric: "Stories of the East"	51
5. Conclusion	64
<b>3. E. J. Thompson: Rhetoric of Voice</b>	
1. Introductory	66
2. <i>The Other Side of the Medal</i>	70
3. Rhetoric of Voice in Action	81
4. Voice and Anxiety in the Novels	86
5. Conclusion	101
<b>4. E. M. Forster: Rhetoric of Gesture</b>	
1. Introductory	103
2. India and <i>A Passage to India</i> : Letters to Masood	110
3. Gesture	128
4. Gesture and Modernism	137
5. Gesture and <i>A Passage to India</i>	146
6. Intertwined Motifs of Hand-Invitation-Rape	156
7. The Inarticulable	164
8. "How can it be expressed in anything but itself?"	169
<b>5. Conclusion</b>	175
<b>Bibliography</b>	179
Bibliographical Appendix: Studies of Indian Writing in English	203

## PREFACE

---

THE THESIS refers consistently to my article "Music and Imperialism" in the journal of the Department of Music of the University of California at Berkeley, *repercussions*, vol. XX, Spring 1995. This is based on material written originally for the thesis, but which I have removed because of the word limit. I offer the article in support of and in conjunction with the thesis, according to a rubric of the Board of Graduate Studies (Paragraph 23, B.O.G.S. *Memorandum to Graduate Students*). Given its subject matter, and the specific way in which this expands into a methodology for the thesis in general, I hope that the article will be read either before the thesis or at the point in the Introduction where I indicate a reader might turn to it. The ideas in the article add much to the chapters of the thesis, and especially to the reading of *A Passage to India* which forms the culmination of the argument of the piece as a whole. Also, the article helps to justify an otherwise untenable compositional position: that in aid of a larger interest in polyvocality and even polyphony—which ideas form the core of the article—I have chosen to use a variety of critical styles throughout the thesis, as opposed to a sustained critical style throughout. I open with a fairly systematic statement of my thesis and methodology, move to a relatively esoteric theoretical rhetoric, and then refer to the musicological discourse of the article—which combines the tone of the previous two styles. Following the Introduction, the three main chapters of the thesis pursue a much more deliberate literary historical style emphasizing research and argumentation, but one which does not mask the self-consciously polyphonic methodology which I argue for in the article and the Introduction. Finally, the conclusion restates what has come before it in the same systematic style as the opening section. The Forster chapter, furthermore, is a good example in miniature of this polyvocal pattern: its eight sections intertwine the scrutiny of rhetorical close reading with literary historical exposition, manipulation of specific theoretical terms, and some speculative elaborations of my own. Both the article and the Introduction provide the authority for this critical polyphony, this intimacy between theme, subject matter, and methodology. It is for these reasons that I have referred so consistently to the article in the text of the thesis.

In order to conform to the word limit, I have removed certain other sections which might have seemed nearly essential: biographies of Woolf and Thompson, readings of other studies of each author including some recent books on Thompson to which I now only refer in passing, certain theoretical explorations, and many footnotes. Also, the notes which do remain are now rather more skeletal than they should be; many consist of nothing more than the author and date of a source in which some supporting,

## PREFACE

---

THE THESIS refers consistently to my article "Music and Imperialism" in the journal of the Department of Music of the University of California at Berkeley, *repercussions*, vol. XX, Spring 1995. This is based on material written originally for the thesis, but which I have removed because of the word limit. I offer the article in support of and in conjunction with the thesis, according to a rubric of the Board of Graduate Studies (Paragraph 23, B.O.G.S. *Memorandum to Graduate Students*). Given its subject matter, and the specific way in which this expands into a methodology for the thesis in general, I hope that the article will be read either before the thesis or at the point in the Introduction where I indicate a reader might turn to it. The ideas in the article add much to the chapters of the thesis, and especially to the reading of *A Passage to India* which forms the culmination of the argument of the piece as a whole. Also, the article helps to justify an otherwise untenable compositional position: that in aid of a larger interest in polyvocality and even polyphony—which ideas form the core of the article—I have chosen to use a variety of critical styles throughout the thesis, as opposed to a sustained critical style throughout. I open with a fairly systematic statement of my thesis and methodology, move to a relatively esoteric theoretical rhetoric, and then refer to the musicological discourse of the article—which combines the tone of the previous two styles. Following the Introduction, the three main chapters of the thesis pursue a much more deliberate literary historical style emphasizing research and argumentation, but one which does not mask the self-consciously polyphonic methodology which I argue for in the article and the Introduction. Finally, the conclusion restates what has come before it in the same systematic style as the opening section. The Forster chapter, furthermore, is a good example in miniature of this polyvocal pattern: its eight sections intertwine the scrutiny of rhetorical close reading with literary historical exposition, manipulation of specific theoretical terms, and some speculative elaborations of my own. Both the article and the Introduction provide the authority for this critical polyphony, this intimacy between theme, subject matter, and methodology. It is for these reasons that I have referred so consistently to the article in the text of the thesis.

In order to conform to the word limit, I have removed certain other sections which might have seemed nearly essential: biographies of Woolf and Thompson, readings of other studies of each author including some recent books on Thompson to which I now only refer in passing, certain theoretical explorations, and many footnotes. Also, the notes which do remain are now rather more skeletal than they should be; many consist of nothing more than the author and date of a source in which some supporting,

illuminating, or relevant idea can be found. The Bibliography is, I hope, as clear as possible for tracking down references easily. However, if certain passages seem unduly obscure I am prepared to supply more detail from a fuller version of the same thesis, which is printed out and ready for consultation if necessary.

In the process of pruning as well as writing I have been greatly helped by Professors Sara Suleri, David Bromwich, and Gordon Turnbull of Yale University, who have been immensely encouraging and supportive for many years. Their insights have wonderfully complemented those of my supervisors at Cambridge, Professors John Beer and Marilyn Butler, whose patience, accessibility, good will, and great advice seem unending. I will always remain hugely grateful to each of them. To Professors Anthony Low and Roger Deakins and my students in the English Department of New York University I owe a vast debt: without the opportunity to teach there in 1994-'95 I would never have been able to finish this project.

To the librarians and archivists of the University Library in Cambridge, the Modern Papers Reading Room and the Indian Institute Library at the Bodleian in Oxford, the India Office Records Library in London, the New York Public Library, Sterling and Beineke Libraries at Yale, Widener Library at Harvard, and most particularly Jacky Cox in the Modern Archives of King's College Cambridge—many thanks and much appreciation. Also to the Provost and Scholars of King's College Cambridge I am grateful for permission to quote from unpublished materials in the Forster Archives.

Large sections of this thesis were written in the remarkably comfortable home of my friends Charlotte and Mark Cunningham—simply the most generous people in London. Timothy Brown and Alexandra Shepard also housed me for extended periods of time in their homes in Cambridge, and provided crucial encouragement. To them, to Clare and Corpus Christi Colleges, and to a grant from the Overseas Research Scheme I am indebted for much of the physical support which has helped sustain me through this long process.

Most massively and most simply, I want to acknowledge the vast generosity and love of my sister and brothers—Callie, DeSales, Jay, Comer, and Ben—and of my four parents, Pegram and Ann and Jack and most of all my wondrous mother Alice. The many words which follow are insufficient to convey my thanks.

*London and Dark Harbor, Maine, 1995*

## ABBREVIATIONS

For works frequently cited I have used abbreviations of titles and page numbers within the text, instead of footnotes. Dates below refer to specific editions cited as listed in full in the bibliography. Abbreviations are as follows:

CI	Edward Said	<i>Culture and Imperialism</i> (1993)
ME		<i>Musical Elaborations</i> (1991)
VJ	Leonard Woolf	<i>The Village in the Jungle</i> (1913)
AT	E. J. Thompson	"Atonement" (1924)
EH		<i>An End of the Hours</i> (1938)
FI		<i>A Farewell to India</i> (1931)
HI		<i>A History of India</i> (1927)
ID		<i>An Indian Day</i> (1927)
NF		<i>Night Falls on Siva's Hills</i> (1929)
OM		<i>The Other Side of the Medal</i> (1974)
AH	E. M. Forster	<i>Abinger Harvest</i> (1967)
AN		<i>Aspects of the Novel</i> (1974)
HD		<i>The Hill of Devi, and Other Indian Writings</i> (1983)
HE		<i>Howards End</i> (1973)
LJ		<i>The Longest Journey</i> (1984)
PI		<i>A Passage to India</i> (1978)
TCD		<i>Two Cheers for Democracy</i> (1972)

A note on terminology: "India" often, but not always, refers to the entire Sub-Continent as a cultural entity distinct from Britain, and unified only by having once been part of the British Empire. I have avoided using the term "Anglo-Indian"—now most often used to describe people of mixed race—and have opted instead for clumsier but more descriptive combinations of "English" and "Indian".

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

---

### THESIS AND METHODOLOGY

THIS THESIS focuses on three English writers from the first half of this century—Leonard Woolf, E. J. Thompson, and E. M. Forster—and presents their ideas and rhetorical strategies as precursors to the postcolonialism of a later generation. The major emphasis is on the anxiety felt by these English individuals over the imperial project in India, over its political and cultural morality. An equally important question is how these writers came to express such moral anxieties in their writing, and thus how their personal reservations came to be communicated at larger levels, social and rhetorical. Underlying all this is an inquiry into how their work contributed over time to changes in the social, political, and cultural ideology of imperialism, changes which ultimately culminated in its disintegration. Thus the central argument of this thesis is that the work of such writers helped prepare the way for the early ideological and rhetorical developments in English writing, both in Britain and in India, which have evolved over time into postcolonialism.

How these changes in the ideology of imperialism came about, especially the degree to which revision at the metropolitan center contributed to its momentum, is still (and will no doubt always be) in dispute. The main thrust here, which I hope will contribute to that debate, is to examine how the rhetorical strategies pursued by these English writers in India helped translate personal and cultural anxieties into expressions from which a larger social and political awareness could be derived, and out of which the evolution of a general postcolonial sensibility in fact began to occur. Thus the rhetoric as much as the ideas themselves—the method as much as the message—is the central concern here. David Lodge notes, “In the criticism of fiction we have learned most notably from Wayne Booth to use ‘rhetoric’ as a term for all the techniques by which a novelist seeks to persuade us of the validity of his vision of experience.”<sup>1</sup> The rhetoric of the English writers examined here, communicating particular and intimate visions of their experiences of India, helped clear the way for later voices, later languages, later perceptions. It did so by preparing the English-speaking center of the empire to admit the basic idea of its own end. That there could be an era after which the sun might set on the British empire took some time to be recognized, and was communicated only by slow degrees and through intertwining events in both Britain and India. Not all of these

---

<sup>1</sup> Lodge (1966), p. 147; Booth (1961).



were acts and statements of rebellion, violent or otherwise, among endemic colonial populations. Many were statements by English people writing in English, and conveyed a subtle rhetoric of protest substantially earlier than either the expressions of nationalism or the postimperial rhetorics generated after political, if not cultural, independence had been gained. Though it will take much analysis to support this claim, we can understand Woolf, Thompson, and Forster in such a rhetorical light as precursors to postcolonialism.

Briefly, this understanding has to do with two levels of analysis operating interdependently. At one level we will explore, often in non-fiction sources, each author's developing anxieties concerning imperialism in India—anxiety as a state of mind. At the second level, we will examine more evidence of these anxieties in the rhetorical turns of various fictions—anxiety as a mode of expression, anxiety as rhetoric. Also, and most importantly, we will concentrate on this actual interdependence of anxiety and rhetoric: in this relationship lies the essentially precursive character of each writer's oeuvre with respect to postcolonialism. Woolf's work represents a subliminal, unrealized anxiety over the imperial project and the inadequacy of English rhetorics to represent either that anxiety or the immorality engendering it. Thompson's work presents the same anxiety now rendered overt, and a deliberate—and deliberately frustrated—search for an alternative rhetoric, one not implicated in the maintenance of British power, with which to announce the crisis of imperialism without perpetuating it. Forster's work succeeds where Thompson's self-consciously fails: embracing anxiety as a productive, even creative state, and formulating out of it a thoroughly new rhetoric emphasizing gesture over voice, a rhetoric of rhythm as opposed to language. Each chapter of what follows will involve parallel examinations of anxiety and rhetoric; while anxiety will be seen to operate behind the text as a state of mind occupying each author, various rhetorical strategies from within the text will be examined as devices for communicating, accommodating, and eventually moving beyond that state of mind. This development—from Woolf's loss of voice, through Thompson's search for voice, to Forster's evolution beyond voice—comprises an attitudinal and rhetorical trajectory leading specifically to postcolonialism.

It will be wise to state at the outset what this thesis does not provide: specifically, a definition of postcolonialism, or any exploration into the definitions provided by others. The thesis operates on an unsystematic, intentionally vague sense of the term—and it does so for deliberate and carefully considered reasons. It will constantly refine and

redefine what it means by "precursor to postcolonialism," but it will rarely concentrate on either term of that phrase outside of the context of the other. This is to maintain a certain critical intimacy between the two positions—to concentrate on modes of colonial rhetoric in the context of, but never according to, the theory and practice of postcolonial rhetoric.<sup>2</sup> In other words, the thesis regards the two conditions in respect of each other, never allowing the perspective of one to define or dominate. This methodology derives, it will soon be seen, more from the material in hand than from postcolonial theory itself. In fact, the thesis as a whole is *oriented to* but *not aligned with* the discourse of contemporary postcolonial theory and practice—which evolves necessarily later than the still-colonial period outlined by these primary sources, and with different strands of influence which will not be researched or examined here.

There is a logical problem here, however: can one speak of precursors to successors, with no central basis defining such relationships? It is no doubt oversimplifying matters to say only that postcolonialism is that which came after colonialism—postcolonialism is something in itself. But what is crucial is that it is something defined by quite essential indeterminacies as opposed to basic stabilities. As a social and a literary phenomenon it developed in resistance to the rigid, dominative stasis of colonialism; and at its most basic, it can be understood as that which resists such domination by avoiding and confounding as many detectable dominative or hegemonic tendencies as possible. Motion, energy, an elusive resistance to convention and form, an opposition to definition—these are distinct and conspicuous characteristics of postcolonialism. Explaining why this is so, and how the authors involved here constitute precursors to such characteristics, will introduce some of the principal starting points for this inquiry as a whole.

In the first three decades of the twentieth century, British imperialism was at what could be called its ideological as well as geographical apogee. Mainly because the empire had grown so vast, a larger engine of imperial propaganda was needed, and was in fact generated to support it. The very idea that there would ever be such a state as

<sup>2</sup> The term 'critical intimacy' is suggested by Forster's interest in intimacy more than anything, and like Forster, it has roots in the Victorian liberalism of Matthew Arnold; see Arnold (1895), p. 257, with his italics: "Sometimes, no doubt, for the sake of establishing an author's place in literature, and his relation to a central standard, (and if this is not done, how are we to get at our *best in the world?*) criticism may have to deal with a subject matter so familiar that fresh knowledge is out of the question, and then it must be all judgment; and enunciation and detailed application of principles. Here the great safeguard is never to let oneself become abstract, always to maintain an *intimate* and lively consciousness of the truth of what one is saying, and, the moment this fails us, to be sure that something is wrong."

postcolonialism, an end to empire, a setting of the sun on any part of Britain's scarlet dominion across the globe, became as unutterable then, probably, as at any other time in its history.<sup>3</sup> This ideology of imperialism admitted virtually no expression of dissent nor transgression of its most basic tenets—whatever might have been inwardly or privately felt. Officially, Britain considered itself the nation best qualified to govern and improve most others outside of Europe. The expression of this general ideology of imperialism took form most insidiously in racism and most pervasively in the inviolated and largely unexamined confidence of the *mission civilatrice* and the “White Man's Burden” by which the far-flung subject peoples and their cultures could be contained and controlled. Edward Said comments in *Orientalism*:

The Oriental is depicted [in Western political and literary texts] as something one judges (as in a court of law), something one studies and depicts (as in a curriculum), something one disciplines (as in a school or prison), something one illustrates (as in a zoological manual). The point is that in each of these cases the Oriental is *contained* and *represented* by dominating frameworks.<sup>4</sup>

However, opposition and resistance to these frameworks did exist, even within the metropolitan West. Said in his companion book *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) explains that among what he left out of *Orientalism* was the study of a perhaps equally extensive quantity of cultural artefacts which resisted this imperial ideology: “There was *always* some form of active resistance, and in the overwhelming majority of cases, the resistance finally won out,” (p. xii). This resistance developed into (among other things) the socio-cultural expression which we now call postcolonialism, although that is not the only way to define either the resistance or postcolonialism. Certainly many of the foundations of that development originated among the dominated, marginalized, subject cultures; but other foundations—precursors—developed in the West, within the center, in the work of the British themselves. Some of these resistant voices are examined here.

What will be left out of this thesis, then, is any further definition or explicit exploration of postcolonialism because what I want to concentrate on is examining not where that resistance led—i.e., to postcolonialism itself—but how some of it developed within the metropolitan center. For complicated reasons, Said chooses to emphasize the

<sup>3</sup> See Hutchins (1967); Mackenzie (1984); Thornton (1966); Woolf, *Growing* (1961), p. 25: “In 1905 when I [was a civil servant in Ceylon], under the guidance or goad of statesmen like Lord Palmerston, the Earl of Beaconsfield, Lord Salisbury, Mr. Chamberlain, and Mr. Cecil Rhodes, the British Empire was at its zenith of both glory and girth.” Also, Curzon (1925), pp. 202, 237-9, on the durbar as a political instrument.

<sup>4</sup> Said (1978), p. 40. Also Lowe (1991), Schwab (1950).

postcolonialism, an end to empire, a setting of the sun on any part of Britain's scarlet dominion across the globe, became as unutterable then, probably, as at any other time in its history.<sup>3</sup> This ideology of imperialism admitted virtually no expression of dissent nor transgression of its most basic tenets—whatever might have been inwardly or privately felt. Officially, Britain considered itself the nation best qualified to govern and improve most others outside of Europe. The expression of this general ideology of imperialism took form most insidiously in racism and most pervasively in the inviolated and largely unexamined confidence of the *mission civilatrice* and the “White Man's Burden” by which the far-flung subject peoples and their cultures could be contained and controlled. Edward Said comments in *Orientalism*:

The Oriental is depicted [in Western political and literary texts] as something one judges (as in a court of law), something one studies and depicts (as in a curriculum), something one disciplines (as in a school or prison), something one illustrates (as in a zoological manual). The point is that in each of these cases the Oriental is *contained* and *represented* by dominating frameworks.<sup>4</sup>

However, opposition and resistance to these frameworks did exist, even within the metropolitan West. Said in his companion book *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) explains that among what he left out of *Orientalism* was the study of a perhaps equally extensive quantity of cultural artefacts which resisted this imperial ideology: “There was *always* some form of active resistance, and in the overwhelming majority of cases, the resistance finally won out,” (p. xii). This resistance developed into (among other things) the socio-cultural expression which we now call postcolonialism, although that is not the only way to define either the resistance or postcolonialism. Certainly many of the foundations of that development originated among the dominated, marginalized, subject cultures; but other foundations—precursors—developed in the West, within the center, in the work of the British themselves. Some of these resistant voices are examined here.

What will be left out of this thesis, then, is any further definition or explicit exploration of postcolonialism because what I want to concentrate on is examining not where that resistance led—i.e., to postcolonialism itself—but how some of it developed within the metropolitan center. For complicated reasons, Said chooses to emphasize the

<sup>3</sup> See Hutchins (1967); Mackenzie (1984); Thornton (1966); Woolf, *Growing* (1961), p. 25: “In 1905 when I [was a civil servant in Ceylon], under the guidance or goad of statesmen like Lord Palmerston, the Earl of Beaconsfield, Lord Salisbury, Mr. Chamberlain, and Mr. Cecil Rhodes, the British Empire was at its zenith of both glory and girth.” Also, Curzon (1925), pp. 202, 237-9, on the durbar as a political instrument.

<sup>4</sup> Said (1978), p. 40. Also Lowe (1991), Schwab (1950).

resistance in the metropolitan center which did not develop until *after* and because of the inspiration of nationalist opposition in the peripheries: his argument is that not until there was a substantial body of political rhetoric and activity among native peoples in colonies and other imperially controlled areas, and correspondent cultural artefacts of dissent and opposition, did a similarly substantial resistance in the metropolitan centers of Europe develop in alignment with that counter-ideology: "The ideological and cultural war against imperialism occurs in the form of resistance in the colonies, and later, as resistance spills over into Europe and the United States, in the form of opposition or dissent in the metropolis," (CI, p. 333).<sup>5</sup> This thesis on the other hand emphasizes some of the resistance to empire which developed without inspiration in nationalist opposition, which developed instead in personal experience with empire and in the difficult task of expressing ideas and attitudes so entirely contrary to the spirit of the metropolitan ideology. Woolf, Thompson, and Forster apprehended, in their often subconscious, incomplete, tentative, anxious, and subtle resistance to empire, some of the attitudinal foundation upon which anti-imperialism eventually came to be based. Also, they displayed some of the rhetorical strategies which developed, in other hands, into a postcolonial cultural criticism. What that culture might be, in any detail, was never something which Woolf, Thompson, or Forster could have imagined with any clarity—thus it will not be the focus here. Instead, the often unclear ways in which these writers contributed to the later inspirations of, if not the definition of, postcolonialism will comprise the process of this inquiry.

To some extent, the pattern of this influence has to do with genre, and transformations of genre. Emerging out of traditions of rhetoric and hermeneutics almost entirely defined by European inspiration and assuming the dominance of European "tradition," these individual talents of varying degree were nonetheless sensitive to alternative structures of expression and interpretation. That they chose fiction as the form for expressing their social vision and concern places them upon the trajectory set up by the mid- to late-nineteenth century realists: Gaskell, Dickens, Disraeli, Kingsley, etc. But they lacked confidence in applying the rhetoric of fiction and the genre of the realist novel to India. There were other traditions of romance, adventure, exoticism—Orientalist discourses—of whose powers to 'depict' India (hardly an irreducible quantity) they were subconsciously or openly suspicious. Their suspicions were not founded on any cultural or critical theory such as Said's; his ideas

<sup>5</sup> Said usually refers to opposition in the colonies and resistance in the metropolis—here, inexplicably, the terms are reversed. See also (CI, pp. 318-319).



from the 1970s were in many essentials seminal and innovative. Nor were their suspicions always inspired by nationalist tensions or political rhetoric emanating from India: although Woolf and Forster were sensitive to the political issues of their day, their novels were written before they formulated such sensitivity in themselves and before they produced any further, more explicit engagement in political questions; Thompson's work was inspired by a combination of aesthetic and social anxieties which had more to do with the oppressiveness of imperial dominance than any pattern of nationalist resistance to that dominance. In general, the suspicions of all three authors were neither developed nor articulated with any systematic rigor, but were in fact quite subconsciously held at times, detectable only in the absence of the traditional patterns of the dominant ideologies, and in the generically unstable articulations of their strangely interpenetrating fictive and political rhetorics. For their novels are indeed strange, and intimately linking the understanding of these novels as a group are the notions of strangeness, foreignness, frustration, anxiety, intimacy itself.<sup>6</sup> The challenge of writing another culture than one's own involves all these things—and it is in this context that these writers contributed to changes in the novel form and what it was capable of representing in a changing world. Here again these writers were, in their manipulations of the novel form, precursors to postcolonialism.

As well as transformations of genre, this precursive relationship has to do with transformations of certain basic rhetorical categories: specifically, realism and modernism. Realist literature of the sort written by Woolf and Thompson began to display in its juxtaposition with other emerging literatures of its time, and with emerging cultural and political pressures, a level of anxiety about its own project which in the event was entirely justified. What Woolf and Thompson (and the early Forster) tried to represent in realist fiction was becoming increasingly unrepresentable in realist fiction, and came to require some of the rhetorical strategies developed in modernism to come to fuller expression. Why and how was this so? The 'modern' human, as Lukács defines it in the context of European writers such as Beckett, Kafka, Joyce, Musil, and others "is by nature solitary, asocial, unable to enter into relationships with other human beings"<sup>7</sup> These qualities are also seen to be a feature of modernist society: human as an individual and human as a social phenomenon are both defined according to them. One might say that the European social phenomenon, during the emergence of cultural modernism, became increasingly conscious of itself as "solitary, asocial, unable

<sup>6</sup> See Kristeva (1991), (1993)

<sup>7</sup> Lukács (1968), p. 20. Also, p. 24; and Lukács (1969), (1978).

to enter into relationships with other human being [or societies]." Especially in the context of imperialism, which in its day-to-day functions involved the European social phenomenon in relationships with other human social phenomena, this self-consciousness was rising, if still submerged or suppressed assertively and often violently. Thus, a social self-consciousness of imperialism was difficult to express before the rhetoric of modernism had developed rhetorical strategies for doing so—in other words, it was difficult to express in part because there had not yet been a Beckett, a Kafka, a Joyce, or a Musil to express it. But eventually, new rhetorical strategies, the need for which in the context of imperialism had been intimated previously by the anxious rhetoric of realism, were first and most gently elaborated by Forster's unique modernism. In *A Passage to India*, and in the modernist experiments and radical revisions to realism from 'native' Indian writers of English language novels, the literature of postcolonial India was essentially germinated. This thesis attempts to outline these developments through specific attention to the texts and their contexts, and how they influence each other.

Literature, in short, is a social act; but how does it help us to understand other social acts, such as those which together constitute imperialism? Frederic Jameson provides an approach toward this question when he says that "generic affiliations and derivations from them provide clues that lead us back to the concrete historical situation of the individual text itself, and allow us to read its structure as ideology, as a socially symbolic act, as a proto-political response to a historical dilemma."<sup>8</sup> Fawzia Afzal-Khan quotes this and Lukács in the introduction to her 1993 book, *Cultural Imperialism and the Indo-English Novel*, in which she argues (pp. 1-4) that ideology, especially as Jameson and Said define it, is a strategy of "containment." She desires to create a revision of the generic understanding by which we can see the ideology of the postcolonial position functioning instead as a "liberating" strategy: "Faced with an ideology of containment that has thus sought to represent the 'alien' writer and his or her people as the dehumanized other, or object, what are the ideological paths open to the postcolonial writer?... He or she can refute the ideology of containment with an ideology of liberation" (p. 5; see also p. 1). For Afzal-Khan, modernism itself represents a mode of regression in which its emphasis on solitude "tends to negate the ongoing dialectic of history," and by which it "points to its own political and moral nonviability in the postcolonial context" (p. 17).

---

<sup>8</sup> Jameson, (1975), p. 157.



I am arguing, on the other hand, that Jameson's suggestion combined with Afzal-Khan's in the context of Lukács' together indicate another possible revision: the ideology of an anxious, tentative *colonial* position itself striving towards a liberating rhetorical strategy, and ever frustrated by its necessary and solipsistic containment in the ideology of still-extant political and cultural structures of colonialism. In other words, I am arguing that there are figures in the colonial period who endeavor, specifically through quasi-realist and proto-modernist rhetoric, to approach a literature of liberation; they are increasingly anxious over their inability to contribute directly to this, and consequently incline toward preparing the genre of the English-language novel to receive the efforts of future generations of ex-colonized writers who can develop a new literature. In this way as well, these individuals from the colonial period—Woolf, Thompson, and Forster—can be understood as precursors to postcolonialism.

THERE ARE OTHER STUDIED EVASIONS in the thesis. Certain rhetorical terms—realism, modernism—serve to focus the argument and methodology of the inquiry, but in a basically undefined fashion. Modernism I will explore in more detail below; first I want to explain my use of realism by appealing slightly more extensively to Lukács.

Lukács makes a vital distinction between critical and social realism which is based on the effort to achieve a balance in the understanding between the human as an individual and the human as part of a social community. Plot often expresses the level of critical or social realism to be attributed to a given text: the *dénouement* of a novel in which the hero resigns himself to the existing order of capitalist society is critically realist; that in which the hero actively participates in the life of the community, no longer in isolation of any sort, is socially realist.<sup>9</sup> This distinction between critical and social realism will become relevant to the sources examined in this thesis when we explore the authors' works in detail and in context. Woolf's attempt to deconstruct a dominant sublime, which ultimately consigns each character into a stark isolation and alienation, but which, when read along with his commitment to hard work and continual engagement in political and social questions in the spirit of co-operation as opposed to competition, comprises a fruitful juxtaposition. Thompson's anxious explorations of intimacy and frustration and the "proper" articulation of social concern, lead him in many places to tropes of inhibition, violence, madness, and loss, but never to resignation and always to another articulation of the same concerns. Forster's

---

<sup>9</sup> Lukács (1968), p. 113.

departures from realist discourse represent an attempt to move beyond the potential resignation and isolation of critical realism, with a vision of the possibility of engagement in a world community and with strong hopes for such a utopia, even though its consummation is consistently deferred. With each of these three we can recall Lukács for a working definition of realism—mainly because in the vast literature of that rhetorical mode, his is the approach most conveniently allied to the social praxis of reform (because of its Marxian orientations), and the one which best gives a sense of the potential to understand the rhetorical strategies of one group of writers as they are inherited and transformed in succeeding ones.

The inspiration to appeal to Lukács comes from Afzal-Khan, whose work on genre and ideology in Narayan, Desai, Markandaya, and Rushdie is grounded in Lukácsian constructions of myth and realism. Her work helps to apply Lukács' concepts to the postcolonial moment, and what I want to do here (as I have said already) is to apply it and her innovations to the still-colonial moment. Afzal-Khan points to the problem of realism in postcolonialism when she states that "Often [realism] falls short of its ideal [of achieving a wholeness, or unity, of existence] and ends up celebrating or urging the choice of one extreme or another....

It addresses itself primarily to the material issues of life and society, without much concern for the spiritual and emotional needs of people. It is usually associated with Western values, for example, rationalism (though not reason, and that is an important distinction), and especially those of commercial enterprise, which, in turn, are the predominant values of modern urban life. It is also associated with the concept of industrial and mechanical progress. (p. 25)

Thus realism is itself a mode of Western hegemony, and must not be insisted upon any more than notions of racial or cultural superiority which we can now see so clearly to be imperialistic and oppressive, even within the domain of intellectual, as well as socio-political articulation. Similarly, the subject matter of this thesis itself suggests these methodological indirections, and does so in an effort to avoid the imposition of critical ideas largely derived from models not germane to that subject matter in general. Both subject and methodology have to do with interpreting a dislocating experience in new terms. What those new terms may be has not yet been completely determined, and will not be in this place. The role and purpose of this thesis is not to make such a contribution; rather it is to inquire into the roots and foundations of any such future developments.

The passage from Afzal-Khan is also useful in other ways. In the margins of these useful delineations in the definition and operation of realism—inside "often",

“primarily”, “without much”, “usually”—are exceptions to the rule of realism as offered here which are worth investigating. There are realists who are at some level aware of “Orientalist” tendencies (though it was not a word available to them in this sense) and who to varying degrees of success try to achieve a vision of social unity which is liberating and not containing. The point of this thesis is that in some cases, these individuals are colonials like Woolf, Thompson, and Forster. Because of the ways in which these writers fit into the pattern developed by Afzal-Khan to “apply to the works of writers from most geographical areas that were once colonies of the British or other European powers” (p. 26), they can be seen to function as precursors.

The ideas may be elucidated by a brief excursus on the tradition in English letters of the realistic novel and the novel as a social document. Woolf’s novel *The Village in the Jungle*, for example, is perhaps the best instance in its time of a good imaginative contribution to the analysis of empire. To say that it exists along the continuum of humanistic comment upon society and imaginative comment upon empire which leads ultimately to the intellectual revisionism of postcolonialism in our own time, requires an explanation of how that idea is to be derived and understood.

THE COMPREHENSION OF RACE AND NATION in English literature is in some ways analogous to the comprehension of class and wealth which occurred a generation or two earlier in its history. There came a generation of writers who were closer to their subject than others, perhaps greater, had been or would be. Elizabeth Gaskell, for example, had neither the resolute confidence of Carlyle nor the fecund imagination of Dickens, but she lived nearer to her subject: the inequalities of class and wealth in urban industrial Britain, specifically Manchester. From this intimacy emanated a new mode in the rhetoric of realism—a rationalization away from the sentimentalism of an earlier generation, and illustrative of the urgent social imperatives of the day.

A constant cry of social reformers and researchers in the mid-nineteenth century was that the greatest impediment to relief for the poor was the difficulty of making the rich and the poor, and their respective concerns, truly known to one another.<sup>10</sup> All the efforts on the part of those reformers and researchers nonetheless could not inculcate this understanding. But the presence in the debate of artists—especially literary artists—transformed matters. George Eliot was entirely conscious of this special power when she wrote: “Appeals founded on generalizations and specifics require a sympathy

---

<sup>10</sup> See Young and Handcock (1956); Cole and Filson (1951); Hammond (1962); Briggs, ed. (1959).

ready-made, a moral sentiment already in activity; but a picture of human life such as a great artist can give, surprises even the trivial and the selfish into that attention which is apart from themselves, which may be called the raw material of moral sentiment."<sup>11</sup>

Furthermore, though "great artists" like Wordsworth and Dickens and Eliot herself could enhance the work of Cobden or Mill or Gladstone, it was the generally lesser artists like Gaskell who knew their subject with a special intimacy, who lived that much closer to it and who were personally involved that much more deeply. Gaskell's *North and South* (1855) is almost exactly contemporaneous with Dickens' *Hard Times* (1854), and if a lesser novel (a point worth arguing, but elsewhere), it is a better evocation of the common theme: the concerns of artistry and human morality are kept in easier balance.<sup>12</sup> *Mary Barton* (1848) is a precursor to the vast, visionary, and comprehensive *Bleak House* (1853), which Dickens might have written very differently without his sustained contact and exposure to Gaskell's more intimate experience of the subject of poverty and social oppression. Also, *North and South* and *Mary Barton* are precursors to the writing which eventually emerges from entirely within the subject—the writing of the working classes which begins to emerge extensively after the widening of education, the voter franchise, and the first steps away from the complete co-optation of all 'hands' by industry which were thereby prevented from writing: Kingsley, Gissing, and a generation later D. H. Lawrence.<sup>13</sup> The literature which presses for even more reform, which can really describe the conditions of work in industry, and eventually the literature which celebrates this life and its idiosyncrasies can emerge as a positive voice, not merely a negative or radical one. This is so because its texts have had precursors to mediate between their positively articulate present and a previous period of voicelessness, texts like *Mary Barton* which mediate between rich and poor and help them better to know each other.

<sup>11</sup> This passage, which I have been unable to locate specifically, is quoted without attribution in Gill (1970), p. 10; I am grateful to Professor Gill for this passage, several bibliographical references, and certain general ideas about the period. Of this spirit in Eliot, see Leavis (1980), p. 16: "A great novelist can never be tempted to see a deified Society as the supremely real thing in relation to which the individual is insignificant." Compare Forster, "Syracuse" (1902), quoted in Furbank (1978), p. 91: "Those who cannot reconstruct the past with the knowledge of the archaeologist or recreate it with the genius of the poet, must perforce call in the aid of sentiment and dream inaccurately of greatness." Contrast the reviewer of Gaskell's *Mary Barton* in the *Athenaeum*, 21 Oct 1848, pp. 1050-51, who wonders "how far it may be kind or wise or right to make fiction the vehicle for a plain, matter of fact exposition of social evils."

<sup>12</sup> See Easson (1973), p. ix: "Dickens's [work], a moral fable, [is] presented in an uneasy mixture of realistic and emblematic characters and situations; Mrs. Gaskell's, a human comedy, [is] traced through consistent and developing characters set in conditions the author understood from long personal experience." Also Hopkins (1952), ch. 7; (1946), pp. 357-385.

<sup>13</sup> See Hoggart (1957); Williams (1983), pp. 162-338.

The figures in the literature of empire, instead of industry, who are equivalent to Gaskell are individuals like Woolf, Thompson, and Forster who lived for intervals quite near their subject, felt a genuine emotional involvement with it, and were able to write empathetically and in varying degrees of resonance about the social and cultural concerns which were trying to emerge and be expressed in their own right. They helped create a cultural evolution toward the climate in which the later 'native' voices might be heard.<sup>14</sup>

The work of these artists moves along with (enhances and is enhanced by) the social, moral, and religious reformers, the journalists, essayists, jurists, and so forth.<sup>15</sup> Each improves the other's appeal by heightening a different, complementary awareness. Also, for those in power who might question how discontent can take root and grow, the novels provide an imaginative insight into areas where they might not want nor be able to go themselves. In an aesthetic text, those in power can be comfortably but effectively educated concerning the discontents of the disenfranchised.<sup>16</sup> This mechanism, as an affective mode combined with the social urgency of the fiction of the industrial age, is familiar rhetoric in English literature by the early decades of the twentieth century.

Consider in this light Woolf, Thompson, and Forster: Woolf shows us as intimate a portrait of village life in South Asia as is available in the literature of any multi-cultural society. Thompson represents anxious, ill-formed attempts at marrying the urgent social agenda with the affective appeal of imaginative literature. Forster achieves a more modernist and persuasive fusion which makes a theme of frustrated intimacy, thereby encompassing both the anxieties of past literary and social vision as well as the tender hope for an achievable, if difficult, future based on community instead of separation.

It is in this spirit that most postcolonial literature of English India has developed, a concern deriving as much from the use of the traditions of English literature and the

<sup>14</sup> M. Mukherjee (1985) indicates only one 19th century novelist writing in English who can be said to have lived intimately with her subject and to have communicated her knowledge successfully in fiction: a Mrs. Collins of Kottayam (d. 1862), daughter and wife of Christian missionaries, who wrote *The Slayer Slain* (1864-6—publication information unknown). Mukherjee comments, also discussing a Bengali novel by Hannah Catherine Mullens, "Though simplistic in their intention and execution, the works by these English women prefigure in a rudimentary way the use of realism in the fictional handling of Indian reality," p. 24. See also M. Mukherjee (1981), pp. 65-75.

<sup>15</sup> See Webb (1909); Masterman (1909); Hynes (1968).

<sup>16</sup> See review of *Mary Barton* in *Fraser's Magazine*, XXXIX, 1849, pp. 429-32: "People on Turkey carpets, with their three meat meals a day, are wondering, forsooth, why working men turn into Chartists and Communists.... Let them read *Mary Barton*."



English language itself as from a shared vision of the transformative potential of cultural exchange and communication, instead of the rigidities of cultural exclusion.<sup>17</sup> First such figures as Rammohun Roy, Sri Aurobindo, Coomaraswamy, and Tagore cleared the linguistic space for Indians writing in English prose;<sup>18</sup> Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand, and R. K. Narayan adopted the novel form to specifically Indian contexts and concerns;<sup>19</sup> then writers such as Kamala Markandaya, Manohar Malgaonkar, Kushwanth Singh, and Bhabani Bhattacharya emerged to offer in realist discourse Indian involvement in the history of the world at large in the middle years of this century; now writers such as Salman Rushdie, V. S. Naipaul, Vikram Seth, Anita Desai, Ved Mehta, Shashi Tharoor, Mukul Kesavan, and so many others—most of them, interestingly, living outside India—represent through a variety of rhetorical strategies the diaspora of ideas and aspirations which represents the English experience of India.<sup>20</sup>

The point is that in a time of social transformations of a vast order, people read the novels and find illustrations of the facts and figures offered in expository writing. The process of reform is accelerated by this combination of expressions. Its earlier phases lead to its later ones, and always the process continues by contingency, not design. Thus the precursor figures such as Woolf, Thompson, and Forster have helped prepare the way for a relatively widespread acceptance (if not thorough understanding) of the many social transformations by which the world has elaborated and altered its definitions and applications of empire.<sup>21</sup> The postcolonialism of the present time is partly to be understood as a process, a transitional phase, a period of time in which the previously voiceless mass of native peoples and cultures has found many voices by which it can speak to its previous oppressors and say "Listen, we are here. If it will help you to understand us better, and to understand yourselves in the context of your historical involvement with us, we will speak in your tongue to you, but in our own

<sup>17</sup> On the development of the novel form in Indian languages other than English—a very different matter from the one being discussed here but with some similar concerns—see M. Mukherjee (1985), chs. 1-2; Rajan, ed. (1989); Clark, ed. and intro (1970); and Santhanam, ed. (1969).

<sup>18</sup> See Roy, ed. by Nag and Burman (1945); Barua, ed. (1988); Srinivas Iyengar (1945); Thompson (1948); Kopf (1969).

<sup>19</sup> See Afzal-Khan, ch. 1, and Bhatnagar (1980).

<sup>20</sup> See Bibliographical Appendix. For an accessible survey, see Walsh (1990).

<sup>21</sup> Contrast Lilamani de Silva (1991): examining "connections between 'fictional' and 'non-fictional' writing on colonialism.... The literary text allows less space for the anti-colonialist impulse and has occupied a more tolerant niche vis-à-vis imperialism than the 'factual' texts.... These selected texts of Woolf and Forster fail to express toward imperialism the dissidence their writers claim and are credited with elsewhere."

way. One reason we can say anything is that your ears are better prepared to hear—there have been some among you who were better prepared or more willing to attend, and they have helped open your ears in general. These have been our precursors. Now that we all know and understand this, now that much more mediation and increased mutual comprehension and respect can occur, let us move on to the business of communicating and being together, as individually distinct cultures, and in aggregate as a civilization.”

For it is to that goal, however elusive, that we are all everywhere tending—and the more we are aware of it, the less elusive it will be. Woolf, Thompson, and Forster in their different ways and degrees, have certainly helped us along.

WE HAVE SEEN now how realism is involved in the notion of precursors to postcolonialism. How might an exploration of modernism contribute further to an understanding of this notion? Some of Raymond Williams’ last writings and lectures which never congealed into a book or a coherent pattern before his death in 1988 have been collected together according to a rough plan he sketched out in his notes, and published under the title *The Politics of Modernism*.<sup>22</sup> It is in the relationship between modernism and post-modernism that Williams works out an applicable cultural theory, his “politics of modernism,” and a polemic embodied in the book’s sub-title: “Against the New Conformists.” The attempt in what follows is to adapt Williams’ ideas to the relationship between modernism and a different “post-”, namely postcolonialism—and in doing so to suggest the role of Forster’s work in particular in the transformations of both modes, modernism and postcolonialism.

Williams’ unstable text seems as appropriate as any for exploring, and not defining, the relevance of political and rhetorical issues to Forster’s work especially with the intent of representing it as precursive, transitional, subversive of stability. Also, to quote a review by Terry Eagleton, one of Williams’ “striking qualities as a writer is a rare combination of reason and feeling . . . a toughly analytical mind is fueled by the rich emotional resources of a creative writer.”<sup>23</sup> This does well—except perhaps for the word “toughly”—as a description of Forster, who was like Williams both a novelist and a critic, and in whom the intersection of creative and critical faculties results in that “striking quality” by which what he writes and how he writes it seem so consistently to define each other. One critic has called this quality in Forster’s writing a “union of its

<sup>22</sup> (1989); further references in text.

<sup>23</sup> Cited on back-cover of Williams (1989) as from *The Observer*, 1989—see Bibliography.



method with its message”—(although it seems he has unwittingly lifted the phrase from Forster’s own admiring comment on Virginia Woolf, that in her writing “method and matter are one.”)<sup>24</sup> This is the same synergy, of course, that I want to demonstrate through the intimacy of anxiety and rhetoric in Woolf and Thompson as well: the status of all these writers as precursors to postcolonialism depends upon the way their anxiety over imperialism is communicated through specifically self-conscious manipulations of realist and modernist rhetorics. Furthermore, the ways in which attention is called to these manipulations are akin to the rhetorical emphases of modernism—and beyond that, of postcolonialism.

There is nothing inherently modernist or postcolonial about such a union of method and message, although the self-consciousness it indicates and the interest in the process of creativity are very much features of the high modernist work of Woolf, Joyce, Eliot, Pound, and others.<sup>25</sup> It is also a feature of that aspect of postcolonialism which endeavors always to call attention, and is equally always frustrated in calling attention, to the mechanisms by which cultural artefacts—creative and critical, theoretical and practical—tend inexorably to perpetuate colonial structures of one sort or another. The analysis of the social world which turns on its own rhetorical methods is a distinctive feature of each mode—and is just as distinctively departed from as each mode develops beyond the moment of its inception. Williams consistently points this out for the case of modernism: “what has quite rapidly happened is that Modernism quickly lost its anti-bourgeois stance, and achieved comfortable integration into the new international capitalism,” (p. 35); he also endeavors to reinstate the original resistance in his analyses: “Cultural theory, which takes all other cultural production as its appropriate material, cannot exempt itself from the most rigorous examination of its own social and historical situations and formations, or from a connected analysis of its assumptions, propositions, methods and effects,” (p. 163). Again, for Williams “cultural theory *is* about the way in which the specifics of works relate to structures which are not the works,” (p. 181, his italics); and the theoretical point which is at the heart of Cultural Studies is the idea “that you cannot understand an intellectual or artistic project without also understanding its formation; that the relation between a project and a formation is

<sup>24</sup> Cavaliero (1979), p. 166; Forster, “The Early Novels of Virginia Woolf,” in (AH, p. 123).

<sup>25</sup> Compare Pinkney, intro. to Williams (1989), p. 3: “When such unavoidable novelty, mere formal by-product of a stylistic innovation whose substance derives from other (religious, social) sources, is at last abstracted out as a content in its own right—a form become a substance, a matrix now paradoxically serving as its own material—we have indeed entered the epoch of ‘conscious modernism’.” See also Pinkney, ed. Eagleton (1989).

always decisive; and that the emphasis of Cultural Studies is precisely that it engages with *both*, rather than specializing itself to one or the other," (p. 151). Thus the emphasis is on *relations*, more than on any one project or formation or position, and deriving from this is an equal emphasis on the *process* of emphasizing those relations: his conception is one of "processes which take these different material forms in social formations of a creative or a critical kind, or on the other hand the actual forms of artistic and intellectual work," (p. 152).<sup>26</sup>

This emphasis on relations, even at the basic level of the word itself, which leads to a context of process, is also conducive to a context of *community*, a community of related processes, ideas, projects, formations, and the minds which both regard and participate in these things. Furthermore, in this element of community, Williams' cultural theory—informed as it is by Marxian social theory—approaches a genuine social and historical resonance.<sup>27</sup> Certainly his emphasis is a more systematic and rigorous application extended from a solid analytical method than Forster's vexatious but tantalizing "belief in personal relationships" which he can never quite fashion into social or political praxis.<sup>28</sup> Williams describes his own position best:

I am saying that cultural theory is at its most significant when it is concerned precisely with the *relations* between the many and diverse human activities which have been historically and theoretically grouped in these ways [the arts vs. society, a conventional distinction which Williams challenges], and especially when it explores these relations as at once dynamic and specific within descriptably whole historical situations which are also, as practice, changing and, in the present, changeable. It is then in this emphasis on a theory of such specific and changing relationships that cultural theory becomes appropriate and useful, as distinct from offering itself as a catch-all theory of very diverse artistic practices or, on the other hand, as a form of social theory proposed or disposed as an alternative—though it should always be a contributor—to more general social and historical analysis. (p. 164)

Generally in all this Williams is suggesting the general cultural "need to unlearn the inherent dominative mode," (p. 181) whatever that mode may be at any moment—the bourgeois, the modern, the postmodern, the colonial, the postcolonial. Since the mode changes, regarding the relations between modes as they give way to the emerging dominance of one another, rather than regarding any one mode at a time, can become "appropriate and useful" where another sort of theoretical methodology might reify and itself tend to be dominative. At this simplest level, then, this theory is generally

<sup>26</sup> See Williams (1980), pp. 37-42, on the 'residual' and the 'emergent'.

<sup>27</sup> This reading, regrettably, involves no attention to issues of capital. Williams work, of course, is more thorough in this respect. See also Kiernan (1974).

<sup>28</sup> See especially his "What I Believe" (1938) and "The Challenge of Our Time" (1946) in TCD.

applicable to cultural processes, and thus as relevant to the postcolonial as to the modern and to the relations between them.

In subtler terms, though, Williams' mechanism for working out a process of resistance which will not itself become reified, has a forward-looking and deeply-felt relevance to the social community, and to the constant effort to widen the community. This resonates with Forster's notion of a rhetoric of expansion (which we will explore eventually); William's compassionate language in the following passage, with its concern for "the neglected works left in the wide margins of the century," suggests furthermore a connection between the unreified avant-garde and the vitally resistant postcolonial voice. It also suggests, in a phrase redolent of Forster's "not yet, not here" that together these voices constitute a community which can be imagined as a "modern future":

The innovations of what is called Modernism have become the new but fixed forms of our present moment. If we are to break out of the non-historical fixity of *post-modernism*, then we must search out and counterpose an alternative tradition taken from the neglected works left in the wide margin of the century, a tradition which may address itself not to this by now exploitable because quite inhumane rewriting of the past but, for all our sakes, to a modern *future* in which community may be imagined again. (p. 35)

This appeal itself constitutes a precursor to postcolonialism. How? Regard the same passage rewritten in an effort to heighten the correspondence between the development and reformulation of modernism in Williams' thought and the development and reformulation of postcolonialism suggested by this thesis under the inspiration of Forster's novel. Thus:

The innovations of what is called Postcolonialism have become the new but fixed forms of our present moment. When we strove to break out of the non-historical fixity of colonialism, we sought out and counterposed the alternative traditions taken from neglected works left in the wide margins of the century's dominance by metropolitan empires—the endemic and hybrid forms which successfully challenged that dominance and helped put an end to much of its formal organization. Now, if we are to break out of the non-historical fixity of the established academic discipline and reified creative/critical practice of postcolonialism which have succeeded the original rhetorics of opposition and resistance to colonial culture, then, as before, we need to look to the margins and counterpose an alternative tradition. In this

thesis, I have chosen to look to the precursive margins, to the material which expressed this and similar resistances *before* the first ones matured and well before they began becoming reified—texts neither often nor directly associated with the development of the postcolonial sensibility, which are shown, all the same, to have prefigured that sensibility, and in many ways to have prefigured and compensated for inherent problems. This insight I have located in some marginal aspects within that material—tropes involving the evasions of language, tropes of gesture; anxieties of authority; anxieties of genre and form. These aspects I have connected as a “tradition” of sorts, or at any rate as a consistent mode which may address itself not to this by now exploitable because quite inhumane rewriting of the imperial past—questions of guilt and complicity which are prevalent in Woolf, Thompson, and Forster. For all our sakes (Byron says there is no freedom, even for masters, in the midst of slaves) we must recall the essential desire of the original postcolonial conception: that desire to get beyond the reifications and silencings of colonialism. Examination of these marginal aspects in marginal works must recall again that same desire—taking particular inspiration from the exquisite hope, the utopian cast of the last line of *A Passage to India*, “not here, not yet”—for a modern *future* in which community may be imagined again.

The aboriginal vision of postcolonialism was of a community of nations and culture; that idea is just as powerfully resonant in people’s creative imaginations as it has always been, but it is not realistically closer to being realized, despite our best efforts in recent decades. And yet it is worthwhile maintaining the vision, as Ashis Nandy comments in his acute essay “Evaluating Utopias: Considerations for a Dialogue of Cultures and Faiths”:

Perhaps a part of the power of our visions comes from their very unrealizability—from their impractical, ‘utopian’ scaffolding and from their implicit, unattainable, normative codes. It is a creative tension with which some persons and cultures prefer to live. The gap between reality and hope which such a vision creates becomes a source of cultural criticism and a standing condemnation of the oppression of everyday life to which we otherwise tend to get reconciled.<sup>29</sup>

---

<sup>29</sup> Nandy (1992), p. 3.

The culture which imagines this modern future of community and awareness is itself engaged in this combined social and rhetorical process—which may never end nor reach a goal, but which is transformative in and of itself, just as the products of those acts of imagination can be worth experiencing in their own right. Apprehending this situation in language is a very tricky matter—hence the anxieties felt by those authors who try to achieve this apprehension, and their various alternative rhetorical strategies for attempting to do so; hence also the performative (and transgressively presumptuous) rhetoric of rewriting Raymond Williams, an alternative critical turn which endeavors to expand the whole process of this inquiry through elaboration and deep scrutiny. That this expanding gaze can itself begin to constitute an imperialistic, acquisitive authority is of course always a risk. Because of this, the idea of the process of actually achieving the community of the future in the “modern”—here, now—is only gestured toward, suggested, hoped for, imagined: always, again, beyond a literal and grammatical grasp.

Forster's involvement in all this has to do with his idiosyncratic relationship to modernism and how this connects to postcolonialism. Malcolm Bradbury precisely captures Forster's queer relationship to modernism, and furthermore characterizes his essentially liminal position between old forms and new—how he points beyond his own position, to the post-position:

Forster's confession that he belongs to the fag-end of Victorian liberalism does express a real inheritance; but that end is also the beginning of new forms of belief and of new literary postures and procedures.... He emerges not as a conventionally modernist writer, but rather as a writer who has experienced the full impact of what modernism means—hope for transcendence, a sense of apocalypse, an *avant-garde* posture, a sense of detachment, a feeling that a new phase of history has emerged—while retaining (with tentative balance that turns often to the ironic mode) much that modernism would affront.<sup>30</sup>

Precisely because Forster's writing fits into no categories and thereby actively resists any attempts to fix it anywhere, it contributes to my larger argument that this very elusiveness has more significance than any specific theoretical or methodological affiliations. The chapter on Forster, for these reasons, presents a close reading of *A Passage to India* in an attempt to orient Forster's work and its modernist affiliations to postcolonialism as an intersection of the proto-modern and the proto-postcolonial. One can either be content to characterize Forster's artistry with such clumsy, mutilating terms, or one can delve deeply into how this awareness is generated. The relationships within Forster's novel, the relationship of his novel to modernism, and its relationship to postcolonialism—“many diverse human activities”—can in this light be seen to make

<sup>30</sup> Bradbury in Stallybrass (1969), pp. 125-6.



an appropriate, useful emphasis on the creative and critical process of imagining the community of the modern future.<sup>31</sup>

THESE BRIEF EXPLORATIONS of modernism and realism, of how they relate to each other and of how in that relationship they relate to postcolonialism, stress the fact of their interdependence over their essential ideological character. The point of this, again, is to formulate the notion of the precursor as a pattern of changing rhetorics caused by anxiety—over the inadequacy of a colonially implicated rhetoric to apprehend either its authors' states of mind or the immoral social situation provoking them—and the search for new rhetorics to perform these tasks. Also, by addressing Williams' suggestive ideas concerning modernism and the lacunae in Afzal-Khan's formulations of realism—and by appealing to many of the same arguments, methodologies, and sources as they—I hope further to endorse the basic notions of interdependence and rhetorical influence. At this stage, without directing attention strongly to definitions of my own, it is otherwise extremely difficult to convey a notion so fraught with theoretical challenges as the notion of the precursor. To use a metaphor used above in different but crucially related contexts, I hope I have cleared some space for the idea. If so, we may now begin to walk into it more deeply—although not in the spirit of acquisition and Orientalist intellectual imperialism which Said cautions us against in *Orientalism*:

[Humanists] have neither watched nor learned from disciplines like Orientalism whose unremitting ambition was to master *all* of a world.... The contemporary intellectual can learn from Orientalism how, on the one hand, either to limit or to enlarge realistically the scope of his discipline's claims, and on the other, to see the human ground . . . in which texts, visions, methods, and disciplines begin, grow, thrive, and degenerate. To investigate Orientalism is also to propose intellectual ways for handling the methodological problems that history has brought forward, so to speak, in its subject matter, the Orient. But before that we must virtually see the humanistic values that Orientalism, by its scope, experiences, and structures, has all but eliminated. (pp. 109-110)

By way of avoiding such an elimination of values, and in order to demonstrate the interdependent pair of levels on which this thesis operates—the level of anxiety and the level of rhetoric—we must now make some effort to elaborate a theoretical perspective upon the early twentieth-century literature of the British in India and its significance for postcolonial literatures of English India today; in other words, to begin formulating theoretically the basic question of how postcolonialism might have precursors.

---

<sup>31</sup> Anderson (1983).

## THEORETICAL INSPIRATIONS

THE NOTION OF THE 'PRECURSOR' is taken from Harold Bloom, as are the notions of 'anxiety', 'influence', and 'intimacy'. His *Anxiety of Influence* expounds a theory of poetry and a new practical criticism which are premised upon a notion of strong poets misreading their precursors.

Poetic Influence—when it involves two strong, authentic poets—always proceeds by a misreading of the prior poet, an act of creative correction that is actually and necessarily a misinterpretation. The history of fruitful poetic influence, which is to say the main tradition of Western poetry since the Renaissance, is a history of anxiety and self-saving caricature, or distortion, of perverse, willful revisionism without which modern poetry as such could not exist.<sup>32</sup>

The analyses of this thesis proceed according to an anxious and oblique misreading of Bloom's theory applied to the varied rhetoric of the British in India. For reasons inherent in that rhetoric and its theater of performance—specifically, the moral urgency of social and cultural, as well as intellectual, revisionism—I offer the notion that a strong poesis of postcolonial criticism derives from the fictions of weak precursors. In other words, this thesis concerns the weak poesis of Woolf and Thompson, and Forster's tentative, anxious rhetoric as precursors to the strong poesis of postcolonialism. The point of this rather wild gesture is to attempt to avoid merely receiving definitions of precursors and postcolonialism, and instead to vivify the concepts as part of a process continually evolving; it is an effort to be within the space of the literature, within a different geography, an effort to be beyond colonialism. All of this is different from inhabiting or espousing the rhetoric of postcolonialism, and inspired as it is by Bloom it stands in a fittingly vexed relationship to the major currents upon which it comments and beside which it runs.

This application does violence to Bloom's theory, shears it of most of its context in Romantic poetry, and pays no respect to other revisions of and objections to Bloom. But though brazen, it refuses to forfeit its own *clinamen*, and having *swerved* in such a manner, claims for itself the status of creativity<sup>33</sup>—just as it argues from the (admittedly

<sup>32</sup> Bloom (1973), p. 30; further references in text.

<sup>33</sup> Bloom, p. 14: "*Clinamen*, which is poetic misprision or misprision proper; I take the word from Lucretius, where it means a 'swerve' of the atoms so as to make change possible in the universe. A poet swerves away from his precursor, by so reading his precursor's poem as to execute a *clinamen* in relation to it. This appears as a corrective movement in his own poem, which implies that the precursor poem went accurately up to a certain point, but then should have swerved, precisely in the direction that the new poem moves."



contentious) idea, very much shared with Bloom, that creative readings misread, that creative interpretations misinterpret, even as those readings and interpretations are going on in poetry and criticism, or in the passive but certainly creative act of solitary reading. Therefore, "if creative interpretation is thus necessarily a misinterpretation, we must accept this apparent absurdity. It is absurdity of the highest mode," (p. 43). All interpretation is creative, all criticism is rhetoric, all writing is reading, and every reading is necessarily a *clinamen*. "The stronger the man, the larger his resentments, the more brazen his *clinamen*." Furthermore, "at what price, as readers, are we to forfeit our own *clinamen*?"

At no price—for it is not possible. This awareness does not mean to suggest that there can be no such thing as a valid interpretation, nor does it descend to a level of nihilism or extreme relativism. Rather it liberates one to the knowledge (which is Bloom's new practical criticism) of "each poem by its *clinamen*" by which "you will 'know' that poem in a way that will not purchase knowledge by the loss of the poem's power." For the sorrows and pains by which the poetry of this context—the reading and writing of India in the present time, which is to say, postcolonialism—are "sorrows at least partially dependent upon the anxiety of influence, and sorrows not separate from the poem's meaning." In other words, the social urgency of postcolonialism criticism is intimately linked to its poetics. Thus while Bloom removes morality from his theory, postcolonialism swerves to reinsert it at its core. By this act of creativity does postcolonialism achieve for itself the status of the strong poet—who sits on the floor of Hell and says, "I am fallen," but thinks as he says this, "As I fell, *I swerved*, consequently I lie here in a Hell improved by my own making," (p. 45)—and that improvement shall be the nature of its poetry.<sup>34</sup>

Thus while Bloom is a strong precursor of postcolonialism (one not bound by physical time, rather one who illuminates from his own time and space what others before and after him have been endeavoring to say), it is in the swerve, in the creativity of difference from Bloom, that the new theory and new practice have their being. How then, do the weak precursors—Woolf, Thompson, and Forster—move toward the

<sup>34</sup> Bloom, pp. 20-21: "Poetry begins with our awareness, not of a Fall, but that *we are falling*. The poet is our chosen man, and his consciousness of election comes as a curse; again, not 'I am a fallen man,' but 'I am Man, and I am falling'—or rather, 'I was God, I was man (for to a poet they were the same, and I *am* falling, from myself.' When this consciousness of self is raised to an absolute pitch, *then* the poet hits the floor of Hell, or rather, comes to the bottom of the abyss, and by his impact there creates Hell. He says, 'I seem to have stopped falling; now I *am fallen*, consequently, I lie here in Hell.'"

strong poesis of postcolonialism by outlining the anxieties by which postcolonialism is chiefly influenced?

First ask, what are these anxieties? Postcolonialism is most essentially concerned with reading and writing a new world, even though always it confines the past within the present. It cannot get beyond the beyond-ness of its own name, it cannot turn back from the past to the future, even as it imagines only future. It is predicated upon dissolving the Other, and yet it retains "the dream of Otherness that all poets must dream," (p. 34). For it seeks a unitary state through elaboration upon, argument with, and even acceptance of the dualism of self/other, black/white, past/present, anxious/stable, even poetry/criticism—"an honest acceptance of an actual dualism as opposed to the fierce desire to overcome all dualisms.... This is the authentic voice of the ruminative line," (p. 33). There is now a certain "ruminative line" of postcolonial critics, each conspicuous for the artistry of his or her criticism as opposed to the mere workmanship of it, each a "poet" by virtue (or vice) of his style, her active rhetorical dreaming. In Edward Said this dream is scholarship, in Salman Rushdie it is a "hybrid" world, in Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak it is teaching, in Homi Bhabha it is some "third state," in Ganesh Devy it is "translation," in Sara Suleri it is rhetoric itself—and these all share in each other.<sup>35</sup> But always, the motion is to make a different (anOther) space, a new reading and writing, a better world. The "dream of Otherness" is derived from the dissolution of Other into Self: in the dream the self is other—other than it is now, and one with the Other which is now. Thus the anxiety is that in dreaming Otherness, one perpetuates otherness, and works against one's first premise which is to dissolve it. A vision of the future which seems to derive from the past and most essentially does not, engenders an immense anxiety that it will be so utterly misread as to be lost.

Varieties of loss themselves comprise other anxieties—loss of vision, loss of expression, loss of self, loss of other. "We know, as Blake did, that Poetic Influence is gain and loss, inseparably wound in the labyrinth of history," (p. 29). Poetry is making and forsaking—so too is reading and writing of any sort. But when reading and writing (essentially the same act) lose their creativity, they decline—no longer toward Hell, but toward Oblivion and out of history. For the strong critic, as much as the strong poet, it is good to remember that "to be judicious is to be weak, and to compare, exactly and fairly, is not to be elect. Milton's Satan, archetype of the modern

<sup>35</sup> Said (1978, 1993, 1994); Rushdie (1991); Spivak (1988, 1990, 1993); Bhabha (1990, 1994); Devy (1987, 1992, 1993); Suleri (1987, 1991).

poet at his strongest, becomes weak when he reasons and compares, on Mount Niphates, and so commences that process of decline culminating in *Paradise Regained*, ending as the archetype of the modern critic at his weakest," (pp. 19-20). For criticism to be strong, it must be less anxious of loss—it must be conscious of itself as a creative presence, poetic, influencing and influenced, and thereby always recoverable.

The recovery of the disadvantaged peoples of the earth and their cultural expressions to the respectful attention of the rest of the world is thus to be predicated upon understanding any theory of their recovery not as paternalism—giving voice to the voiceless who cannot speak for themselves; nor translation—re-writing in one language what cannot be said in its own language; nor as interpretation—imposing meaning by misreading. Rather the recovery must proceed poetically, and all criticism which assists in that recovery must be conscious of itself, even anxiously, as creative and in intimate complicity with a poetic task.

AN EXAMPLE of this strong poetic criticism of postcolonialism is found in Sara Suleri's *The Rhetoric of English India*. In her sustained meditation on Edmund Burke's notion of the sublime she also emphasizes anxieties of loss and intimacy.<sup>36</sup> She reads Burke as being intensely—and rhetorically—creative: "his obsession with loss initiates a novel vocabulary, in which the conceptual distance of India is inextricably linked to the proliferating anxieties of empire," (p. 26). Furthermore, there are creative advantages to acknowledging the "apparent absurdity" of anxious guilt at the heart of the expanding imperial project: "As the most eloquent and certainly most widely read member of Parliament to debate the question of India, Burke supplied imperial England with an idiom in which to articulate its emergent suspicion that the health of the colonizing project was dependent on a recognition of the potentially crippling structure of imperial culpability," (p. 26). This notion of guilt—which develops rapidly into "horror", "cultural terror"—is derived as much from the intimacy of creativity and criticism as from that of the poet and the precursor. Suleri makes the point that Burke's *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origins of Our Ideals of the Sublime and Beautiful*<sup>37</sup> constitutes a "study of the psychic proximity of aesthetic discourse with the concomitant intimacy of cultural terror," (p. 36). Earlier she has discussed Burke's speeches on

<sup>36</sup> (1991), ch. 2, "Edmund Burke and the Indian Sublime"; and ch. 3, "Reading the Trial of Warren Hastings." Further references in text. See also Suleri (1987); Musselwhite, in Barker et al. (1986), pp. 77-103; and Carnall and Nicholson, eds. (1989).

<sup>37</sup> (1757), ed. with intro. and notes by Boulton (1958); see also Burke (1981, 1991).

Fox's East India Bill, where Burke establishes an interpretative paradigm in which "India as a historical reality evokes the horror of sublimity, thus suggesting to the colonized mind the intimate dynamic it already shares with aesthetic horror," (p. 28). In short, she emphasizes the essential creativity of Burke's "swerve" (she uses the word) by which his *interpretative*, critical rhetoric renders the Indian sublime "indistinguishable from the intimacy of colonial terror," (p. 28). Behind all of this, and defining the swerve most emphatically, is "the insistence on the difficulty of representing India at all in the English language," (p. 26).

Suleri's own critical creativity takes root in this last point, as she stresses that Burke's treatise "achieves an astonishing act of colonization in itself" by valorizing the concept of "difficulty" as opposed to clarity—"difficulty" suggests "a discursive circumnavigation at the very point where the orator is casting up his rhetorical hands at the impossibilities of navigation," (p. 27). For Burke, difficulty and obscurity are no longer provocations to a speculating or speculative mind desiring to unveil meaning behind an exotic shroud which has been calculated to inspire curiosity and the distracting pleasure of exegetical exercise. Rather, in the Burkean sublime, difficulty unveils further proliferations of difficulty, resistance, thickness, and darkness. Burke apprehends the obscure in a way that "keeps the narrative of obscurity intact . . . [and] adds to the category of the sublime an unreadability that is a proleptic anticipation of the productive difficulty he places at the heart of his representation of the Indian subcontinent," (p. 39). Thus through the discourse of difficulty, the Indian sublime itself—the vast, uncategorizable, unreadability of an Orientalist's India—is made productive, not distracting or destructive as much postcolonial criticism is apt to assume. How this occurs, and what it signifies for subsequent representations of the Indian subcontinent in English, is a question of central relevance to this thesis.

This notion of the productivity of difficulty all but vanishes in the 19th century as Burke's Indian sublime, which reads India with political and aesthetic respect, degrades into what Suleri calls "an oblique mode of the picturesque." The momentum of colonial acquisition (both economic and geographic) is mirrored in a colonial defensiveness by which the Indian sublime, the proliferating Otherness, is literalized and catalogued and listed and labeled by generations of Orientalists, administrators, ethnographers, travelers, diarists, educators, jurists, missionaries, engineers, architects, artists, gardeners, novelists, etc. In the struggle for supremacy within the imperial project between the interests of state and the interests of mercantilism, a unifying factor becomes the mechanism by which all that cannot be catalogued or listed is appropriated



into the category of the picturesque or the exotic, and is in some degree suppressed. This sublimated sublime extrudes periodically in the dynamic of romanticism and in the dialectic of romanticism and utilitarianism.<sup>38</sup> The more resonantly operative mode of the picturesque, however, evolves parodically toward blatant racism. It has been the inspiration of postcolonialism to see this rhetoric as alienating and solipsistic: "the empowerment of the spectator at the expense of the spectacle," (p. 38), and endlessly perpetuating binarisms of subject/object, self/other, safe/threatening, etc. In the climate of this understanding (gleaned from Said and Fanon)<sup>39</sup> it is difficult to see backwards to Burke's Indian sublime and identify it as *productive*. It is perhaps even more difficult to envision a new sublime—a postcolonial or multicultural sublime—and in that, to develop a productive praxis for our own political and aesthetic time and space. But from Suleri's reading of Burke we learn that perhaps *only* in a discourse of difficulty will it be possible to return to Burke's respectfulness and antipathy to the picturesque; that, difficult though it may be to construe and to accept, such a new sublime may constitute a highly effective, highly creative criticism.

Suleri repeatedly stresses Burke's discourse of difficulty, even to the point of rendering her own discourse difficult. Essentially, she circumnavigates the idea that we must learn not to translate but to read the "difficult" and "obscure" which we have colluded in generating: "the colonial spectator is as implicated as the audience of sublimity in the structure of event; the former too must learn to read a narrative of obscurity as an unhinged allegory that unfolds beyond the boundaries of conceptual stability," (p. 39). Moreover, "if a discourse of difficulty is the only idiom that will suffice to represent such derangement, then it demands to be recognized as clarity on its own territory, and resists a translation into aesthetic luminosity." In this light we see how the more Burke stressed the vast and proliferating otherness of India into which the British had little empathetic access as yet, the more he could expose as unwise and immoral the ignorance, arbitrariness, contingency, and haphazardness of British administrative structures in India. By invoking the difficult extremes of obscurity and distance he could better highlight the moral dubieties inherent in colonial possession. His Indian sublime thus became *productive* of a moral imperative for change.

In an effort to outline something of the vexed role of theory in this thesis—that the thesis is *oriented to* but *not aligned with* nor explicitly *engaged in* the debates of contemporary postcolonial theory and practice—this section has been asking two

<sup>38</sup> See Leask (1992); Majeed (1992).

<sup>39</sup> Said (1978, 1992), Fanon (1967).



simultaneous questions: how did Burke construe his moral sublime? and how does Suleri's postcolonialism learn from his example and generate something similar? I have generally implied that an approach to the latter question can best be initiated by asking questions such as the former. The more we know about postcolonialism's precursors, the more we may be able to rescue them from an incomplete history of events and ideas which, for reasons of canonization, political correctness, and other forces in contemporary culture, we have tended to read as a record of pure oppression and ignorance. Postcolonialism at its best can be understood as an effort to widen the sum of human knowledge and understanding in the context of the creative by-products of European colonial expansion into the larger world. Its precursors, then, are ideas which developed along with that expansion without contributing to it, and which worked instead against the energies by which the expansion was fueled. Rather than representing a genealogy of ideas progressing toward postcolonialism, each precursor stands as an example of lost wisdom or forgotten understanding, which, in the dominant (and perhaps temporary) climate of many of the "new" inspirations of postcolonialism, stands the chance of being resurrected and seen in a new light. This, in a way, inhabits an intellectual space rather closer to that utopian one in which questions of who has oppressed whom and for what reasons will no longer need to be asked. Thus, in a way, by inquiring into the precursors of postcolonialism, we will help to dismantle postcolonialism: for it is, or should be, only a transitional phase in criticism. By engaging in an exercise which at once acknowledges and concentrates no longer on the binarisms and oppressions which gave rise to it, we will hasten the transition toward something else more ultimately stable and valuable.

It is with this imperative that postcolonialism begins and ends. The clarity by which empire is seen as catastrophic stands in stark contrast to the discourse of difficulty and obscurity which was its earliest precursor, and oppositely to the disengagement from the morality of guilt and complicity which is its utopian telos and by which it ends. In other words, postcolonialism has its roots in Burke's Indian sublime because what appeared to Burke as an abundance of history and tradition too difficult to catalog but worthy of perpetuation and respect—i.e., a vision and representation of an Indian sublime—is akin to the self-consciousness and co-optation of alterity which has empowered postcolonialism to reject the neurotic ethnography that succeeded Burke in the political and cultural imperialism of the 19th and 20th centuries. But in its vision of a non-imperial future (as opposed to a postimperial present, still complicitous with its imperial past) postcolonialism strives to jettison its moral agenda for lack of need and to

simultaneous questions: how did Burke construe his moral sublime? and how does Suleri's postcolonialism learn from his example and generate something similar? I have generally implied that an approach to the latter question can best be initiated by asking questions such as the former. The more we know about postcolonialism's precursors, the more we may be able to rescue them from an incomplete history of events and ideas which, for reasons of canonization, political correctness, and other forces in contemporary culture, we have tended to read as a record of pure oppression and ignorance. Postcolonialism at its best can be understood as an effort to widen the sum of human knowledge and understanding in the context of the creative by-products of European colonial expansion into the larger world. Its precursors, then, are ideas which developed along with that expansion without contributing to it, and which worked instead against the energies by which the expansion was fueled. Rather than representing a genealogy of ideas progressing toward postcolonialism, each precursor stands as an example of lost wisdom or forgotten understanding, which, in the dominant (and perhaps temporary) climate of many of the "new" inspirations of postcolonialism, stands the chance of being resurrected and seen in a new light. This, in a way, inhabits an intellectual space rather closer to that utopian one in which questions of who has oppressed whom and for what reasons will no longer need to be asked. Thus, in a way, by inquiring into the precursors of postcolonialism, we will help to dismantle postcolonialism: for it is, or should be, only a transitional phase in criticism. By engaging in an exercise which at once acknowledges and concentrates no longer on the binarisms and oppressions which gave rise to it, we will hasten the transition toward something else more ultimately stable and valuable.

It is with this imperative that postcolonialism begins and ends. The clarity by which empire is seen as catastrophic stands in stark contrast to the discourse of difficulty and obscurity which was its earliest precursor, and oppositely to the disengagement from the morality of guilt and complicity which is its utopian telos and by which it ends. In other words, postcolonialism has its roots in Burke's Indian sublime because what appeared to Burke as an abundance of history and tradition too difficult to catalog but worthy of perpetuation and respect—i.e., a vision and representation of an Indian sublime—is akin to the self-consciousness and co-optation of alterity which has empowered postcolonialism to reject the neurotic ethnography that succeeded Burke in the political and cultural imperialism of the 19th and 20th centuries. But in its vision of a non-imperial future (as opposed to a postimperial present, still complicitous with its imperial past) postcolonialism strives to jettison its moral agenda for lack of need and to

immolate itself upon the valuable, beautiful, and equable elaboration of culture—the new sublime.

THE LAST THEORETICAL INSPIRATION I would like to have presented is that of Edward Said. Unfortunately, for reasons of space and with much regret I have had to exclude a reading of his work from the present thesis. I submit in support of what follows my published article, “Music and Imperialism”—and suggest that it be read now, before continuing on with the main body of the thesis.

Said is a significant and prominent influence for two reasons. In the first case, his work initiated these debates in 1978 with *Orientalism*, and further stimulated and extended them in 1993 with *Culture and Imperialism*. Part of Said’s point in both these books is that the sort of cultural and literary criticism he performs in each is meant to widen the whole potential of intellectual and human understanding. In the spirit of that wideness, my article approaches his contribution to the issues with a decided swerve by examining less of those two books, precursors to so much further work in this field, and more of his highly suggestive writing on music to be found in his 1991 book *Musical Elaborations*.<sup>40</sup> This text apprehends quite intuitively much of what Said is trying to say about how to accommodate any given interpretative methodology. *Culture and Imperialism* and *Musical Elaborations* can be read together—the one elaborating the other; they illuminate each other in a way which itself underscores the value of polyvocality and the juxtaposition of seemingly unrelated essential positions and voices. For this reason, my approach to Said is organized around his notion of “counterpoint” and various revisions to it derived from his own work.

In the second case, my reading is a more essentially performative evocation of the ideas being brought to bear—it enacts them, rather than merely stating them. As such, it is intended to provide a transition into the case studies of the later three chapters on Woolf, Thompson, and Forster—as it were, to constitute in itself the sort of transitional process which Suleri identifies as postcolonial criticism, and which serves to clear the intellectual space for a less vexed cultural and literary creativity.

Beyond these reasons, Said helps connect Raymond Williams’ work on modernism to the context of postcolonialism. Said describes the chief energy of Williams’ thought as a “need to unlearn the inherent dominative mode”—this being “the kind of badgering, hectoring, authoritative tone which has even come through in Cultural

---

<sup>40</sup> Further references to CI and ME in text.

Studies," (Said, interviewed in Williams (1989), p. 181). In "challenge" to this, he seeks "a rather more critical, engaged, interactive, even—though one hates to use the word dialogical because of the recent cult of Bakhtin—a dialogical approach, in which alternatives are presented as real forces and not simply to provide a kind of balance leaving, of course, the holder of the balance invisibly behind the screen—the person who really has the power. And this can only ultimately be done in a collaborative or cooperative way." Here, in 1986, Said seems to be approaching the later formulation in *Culture and Imperialism* and *Musical Elaborations* of a polyphonic and transgressive discourse for resisting the reifying tendencies of creative and critical processes. That this discourse is itself a process he does not seem to indicate in this statement—although the resistance to "balance" implies a suspicion of the static. Still, as he will explore in his later books, the suspension over time of cooperation and collaboration results in what is in effect a process of forming a wider sense of community. Then, even this process can be rapidly co-opted into totalitarian social processes, counterpoint becoming tantamount to collaboration with the aggressor instead of with the resistance; the senses of "collaboration" and "resistance" eventually can take on war-time meanings which involve degrees of capitulation to totalitarianism. This reification, in turn, can be resisted by a more general texture of transgression which has a utopian cast—as I have tried to demonstrate, for example, by rewriting Williams, a transgressive act in the service of a larger ideal, a variation upon a theme. In this way can Said's postcolonial utopia be shown to derive from William's modern future.

FOR THESE SAME REASONS the following three chapters allude, in form and substance, to the methodology for interpreting the relationship between culture and imperialism as illustrated in the interdependent relationships between the work of Said, my own distillation of some of his ideas, and the theoretical inspirations and frustration of the other critics considered so briefly above. These chapters also strive to perform analogous acts of creative criticism in a similarly idiosyncratic, polyphonic fashion—to operate on the two interdependent levels of anxiety and rhetoric. We turn now to Woolf, with his sublimated anxiety and collapsing rhetoric; to Thompson, with his overt anxiety and explicit search for a viable rhetoric; and to Forster, with his anxiety rendered productive and a new, functioning, gestural rhetoric. We turn now to the precursors themselves.

## CHAPTER TWO

# LEONARD WOOLF

---

### REALISM AND RATIONALISM

LEONARD WOOLF'S FICTION comprises a very small portion of his oeuvre, but it is the earliest material he published and is among his most interesting writing—especially in the context of imperialism. Woolf, like so many Bloomsbury figures, was very much an anti-imperialist in the middle and later stages of his career, but again like many of his friends and colleagues, he only began questioning that most basic pattern of British social, cultural, and commercial organization in his middle years and after having served in the Imperial Civil Service. The fiction which emerges out of his experiences in Ceylon (1904-1911) is interesting not so much for its anti-imperialism, nor even its latent disgust at the effects of imperialism on varieties of human existence. Rather it is interesting for an anxious uncertainty about how to express or even conceive such a thing as anti-imperialism in a world where imperialism is so very much the norm. How does one swim against such a strong stream? How can one find the words, and along with them the strategies for organizing them, by which to communicate resistance to an entire social understanding? The effect of this anxiety on the rhetoric of his fiction is in many ways the key to understanding why he renounced fiction for other genres in the fight against imperialism, and is also a good mode for interpreting the peculiar qualities of the fiction itself. Anxiety as a state of mind and anxiety and a mode of expression converge in his novel *The Village in the Jungle* and in his short stories "A Tale told by Moonlight" and "Pearls and Swine". Here we shall analyze how this convergence happens—and how it operates within the rhetorical context of a decaying nineteenth century realism, an emerging modernism, and the eventual development of postcolonialism. Through this rhetoric of anxiety Woolf represents the inability of a western discourse to represent either the horror of imperialism, or its own complicity in perpetuating imperial perceptions, expectations, and even ideologies. In this, in his rhetoric of anxiety within an imperial context, he is a precursor to the critical and cultural resistance to empire which is so important an aspect of postcolonialism.

Two brief moments in *The Village in the Jungle* (1913) may serve to introduce what Woolf is trying to convey in this depiction of the life of Sinhalese jungle-dwellers. It is a life of hunger, debt, and fear; a life in which the law of the jungle is the law of the village, and interaction and communication between people in any other terms are either destructive or impossible. In the first example, we see the village hunter Silindu under



arrest and being led through the jungle to town; he will await trial for the murder of his village headman and a manipulative creditor who, after years of sly, persistent malice, have conspired against him in trumped-up charges of theft. He has given himself up to arrest because he is exhausted by a lifetime of hunting and being hunted—he is an essentially harmless man who has been hounded to violence, and now he merely wants to rest. “The thought came to him even now to slip into the jungle and disappear.... But he still followed the police sergeant and had not the will or the energy for so decisive a step, for breaking away from the circumstances to which he had always yielded, for taking his life in his hands and moulding it for himself. He had tried once to fight against life when he killed the Arachchi [headman] and the Mudalali [the creditor]; he was now caught again in the stream; evil might come, but he could struggle no more” (VJ, p. 251). Silindu realizes that the cycle of life—of the hunt, of fear, hunger, and reparation—is inescapable without the sustained energy to operate outside its terms. He has not that energy, and his environment itself has sapped him of it; he has not that will, nor that creativity and vision. His one act of instinct has been grand but wrong, and in any case insufficient—also, of course, utterly destructive. His perception, like his will-power, will slowly wilt from this point on, as he lapses into life in prison. Constantly murmuring a Pali mantra, he is again unable to communicate with anyone—at least now, releasing him from need, desire, and emotion this loss of language means rest, far away from village and jungle both.

In the second example, which actually comes earlier in the book, we see Silindu merely bending under the hardships of his life—the headman’s malice, hunger, exhaustion. He withdraws into himself and interprets the world as being engulfed by a sublime evil under which resistance, as much as interpretation or inquiry, is impossible. “As the years passed he became more sullen, more taciturn, and more lazy. Some evil power—one of the unseen powers which he could not understand—was, he felt, perpetually working against him” (VJ, p. 43). Whereas later he can know that all the bad things which have happened to him had pragmatic causes, at this stage he is not “conscious of [the headman’s] enmity, or aware that many of the difficulties of his life were due to it” (VJ, p.42). Ranged under this perceived sublime, his perceptions and behavior become idiosyncratic, eccentric—this and the pragmatic fact visible to everyone else in the village that the headman has it in for him, make him and his family something of an outcaste group: “gradually the hut of the veddas, as they were nicknamed, seemed to the other villagers to fall under a cloud. The headman’s enmity and the strange ways of Silindu formed a bar to intercourse. And so it came about that

[his daughters] Punchi Menika and Hinnihami grew up somewhat outside the ordinary life of the village. The strangeness and wildness of their father hung about them; as the other women said of them, they grew up in the jungle and not in the village. But with their strangeness and wildness went a simplicity of mind and of speech, which showed in many ways, but above all in their love for Silindu and each other" (VJ, 43). It is through love that the family can be most easily hurt and, in the end, destroyed. And even though Silindu comes to feel that the village and the jungle are the same, that the "evil" which he had understood to dominate his life up to the crisis of his one act of will, is only a different degree of desperate self-preservation by which all living things, in the jungle or the village, seek to stay alive—even though Silindu comes to realize this pragmatic explanation for his evil sublime, he refuses to act upon the realization, and as an understanding or mode of wisdom, it lapses away from articulation.

The dismemberment of the evil sublime by realism, the advance and retreat of a rationalistic understanding in Silindu, and the eventual re-absorption of Silindu and the other characters into this sublime are the principal motions of the text. Realism attempts to convey not so much the quality of life in the village as to combat rationally the alternate rhetorics which stifle both it and the lives of many people. Realism fails in this attempt, giving evidence along the way of Woolf's sublimated anxieties and the inadequate rhetorics with which he tries to apprehend them. The effect of this is to make the book more useful as an analog of the effects of imperialism, psychological as well as rhetorical, than as a mere realist illustration of life in a village under (rather distant) imperial control.

Does this analog of empire constitute a critique of empire?<sup>1</sup> The characters never encounter oppression at the hands of the British; the only British man in the book is a fair and perceptive judge, inclined to be sympathetic to the lives and disadvantages of the villagers. No systematic argument with empire is engaged, and the narrative of events is offered as a case for contemplation in the general context of human civilization. How, then, does this English-language novel about Sinhalese villagers function in the general context of British imperialism? Is the novel a critique of its imperial context, and if not, what is it instead?

<sup>1</sup> See review in *New York Times*, 7 Mar 1926, p. 8: "The novel stands as a sincere work of art, well worth considering for the picture of the great world inherent in the little world blotted out by the crime and folly and pettiness which betrayed it to the common foe." Other reviews listed in Bibliography. Contrast Rosenbaum (1993), p. 299.

The process of Silindu's awakening into a realistic and rational understanding of what has been victimizing him all his life, operates in counterpoint with his apartness from his own society. This is equivalent to the process by which an English reader might awaken to a rational and realistic understanding of the process of general victimization which has been happening within his or her culture all through the life of empire; along with this comes the contrapuntal realization of societies which have existed apart from, though ostensibly governed by, the imperial and colonial societies—villages in the jungle. The text evokes an understanding of the life of victimization and alienation which the villagers in the jungle live, especially those who try for whatever reason to run against it. By extension, a reader who receives this understanding can perhaps make the imaginative act of sympathy with the subjects of empire in general—victims just the same, only more widely. Always remembering we are taking Woolf's occasionally paternalistic view, we can read Silindu as "India." India has for a long time been an unwitting victim of sly, self-serving malice and greed. Its livelihood has been constricted by over-regulation, legal chicanery, and ill-conserved resources. Its environment is unhealthy for and inhospitable to industrialized human habitation—only the meagerest existence can be eked out of it. Its access to any understanding of how and why it is being menaced is slight, and only exists in the potential of theory.<sup>2</sup> Intercourse between the dominant English culture and the disadvantaged native culture is barred by all these intervening conditions, distractions, and abuses. As the narrative of history progresses, and events accelerate toward a crisis, violence erupts as an answer to sustained abuse—Silindu's murders—but it is ill-considered, or entertained only in an excited, uncontrolled, retributive spirit, and so is inadequate to its motive, which is to destroy utterly the source of oppression, whatever (and however vaguely misunderstood) it may be. After the crisis, the natural law of the jungle returns uninhibited: social structures decay, the sense of the sublime evil returns to frame the narrative and to reclaim the withered perceptions and resources of those who fought to dispel it for a while. Such is Woolf's vision in this particular text—of the village in the jungle, of the British in India.

<sup>2</sup> See *Letters*, pp. 124-5, 127-8: to Lytton Strachey, 3 Mar 1907, and 28 Apr 1907: "Theoretically everyone is told that he is equal with everyone else, while practically we try to be paternal, despotic, to be what we were and refused to remain 50 years ago.... The boys are taught to hate us not because we treat them as inferiors, but because we treat them as inferiors and tell them that they are their own equals"; "We have gone too far to give up liberalism.... but it is almost as to [?one] against us. It can only succeed if the natives believe in us, and they don't.... They don't understand and they don't believe in our methods."

Furthermore, in the same sense that Silindu's environment has sapped him of any sustainable energy to change it, beside one self-destructive act of violence, the larger rhetoric of Woolf's text approaches a similar inertia and even cynicism about the whole liberal humanist project and the environment of imperialism. Woolf's perception, like Silindu's, ossifies—a specific loss of language occurs by which he ceases to be able to communicate through realism any reality other than one irretrievably inarticulate and suppressed. This is a further proliferation of the liberal sublime.

Certainly it is now known that this tendency in liberal humanism leads to what Said in *Orientalism* has exposed as a "seductive degradation of knowledge" (p. 328):

A capacity for managing political movements, administering colonies, making nearly apocalyptic statements representing the White Man's difficult civilizing mission—all this is something at work within a purportedly liberal culture, one full of concern for its vaunted norms of catholicity, plurality, and open-mindedness. In fact, what took place was the very opposite of liberal: the hardening of doctrine and meaning, imparted by "science," into "truth." For if such truth reserved for itself the right to judge the Orient as immutably Oriental . . . then liberality was no more than a form of oppression and mentalistic prejudice.... We can accept the proposition that liberal humanism, of which Orientalism has historically been one department, *retards* the process of enlarged and enlarging meaning through which true understanding can be attained. (p. 254)

Still—we can perhaps recover Woolf from such accusations of Orientalist and liberal humanist paternalism. The relationship between his Ceylonese experiences and the Cambridge-Bloomsbury environment in which they were recollected and written down indicates Woolf's unique perspective on that environment and its intellectual limitations. S. P. Rosenbaum, in his meticulously researched *Edwardian Bloomsbury*, observes that Woolf's "works of and about Ceylon have more than just tangential relations to Bloomsbury. When examined together and in the context of the Group's literary history, they display a family resemblance to Bloomsbury's writings that extends from the Cambridge philosophy to the literature of imperialism."<sup>3</sup> Woolf's work, in other words, helps provides something of a transition away from the liberal Orientalism toward the more fully-fledged protest against imperialism with which Bloomsbury eventually came to be associated. This transition has to do with, quite specifically, sublimated anxieties concerning imperialism and various inadequacies and actual losses of voice with which to express those anxieties.

Part of what accounts for this in Woolf is that for him the sublime against which he is counterposing his liberal rationalism is not so much Indian as barbarian, anti-

<sup>3</sup> Rosenbaum (1994), ch. 14, p. 391. Also, Forster's review of *Growing*, *The Observer*, 5 Nov 1961, p. 29.



civilizational, inhuman. Woolf's utter lack of religious faith and an inherent suspicion of doctrine or dogma of any sort—intellectual, social, and political as well as religious—are behind this deconstruction and reconstruction of the sublime. His vision is utterly secular.<sup>4</sup> It is not an active atheism, nor a doctrinal humanism—simply a stark sense of the ephemerality and malevolence of human life.<sup>5</sup> The text argues that barbarianism is inscribed at the deepest levels of human institutions, that the real threat to human civilization comes from within its own institutions as they exist at present.<sup>6</sup> This threat can only be dispelled by de-sublimating it, confronting it rationally, and operating on new terms: build a hut out of the jungle, fight back the natural encroachment and not consider that it is anything to be feared; appeal to the wisdom of the disenfranchised, as Woolf does when he makes the focus of his narrative not any just villagers but outcasts in their own home; communicate with those who are voiceless, as Silindu does when he speaks with the animals because his discourse with fellow human villagers is so vexed. The text suggests in these secularizing strategies by which the sublime is rationalized that through the effort to achieve an understanding of the lives of these people one can also achieve an improved understanding of how to combat the forces of anti-civilization. Empire, which like the social structure of the village is based on fear and hunger and debt, is not civilized. There is no lasting gain from being merely resigned to that fact; and there is much to be lost in succumbing to a vision of some sublime evil which governs the world—that is tantamount to prison and analogous to Silindu's resignation, to the extreme disenfranchisement of his incarceration, and to his jingoistic faith in a scrap of scripture. Instead, one must seek the pragmatic, secular explanation for all that happens, and one must know that sooner or later, one will find it. In the spirit of that reality and rationalism, perhaps, one will have prepared oneself to avoid the nausea which comes at the perception of the absence of evil—or, for that matter, of empire. Then, without elevating anything else in evil's or empire's place, one might build a civilization accordingly.

For Woolf, the sublime seems to operate according to Friedrich von Schiller's conception in the opening of his (1801) essay "Über das Erhabene", "On the Sublime":

The will is the genetic characteristic of man as species. All nature proceeds rationally; man's prerogative is merely that he proceeds rationally with consciousness and intent. All other things "must"; man is the being that wills. (p. 193)

<sup>4</sup> See *Sowing* (1960), pp. 43-52, and *Quack! Quack!* (1935).

<sup>5</sup> See *Growing* (1961), p. 16.

<sup>6</sup> See *Barbarians at the Gate* (1939), p. 177.



So long as humans claim this prerogative to proceed with "consciousness and intent" they can be said to be working toward civilization. But the moment they step away from that—and it is very easy to lose perspective on one's actions, which is to say consciousness, and to lose control of their consequences, which is to say intent—they begin to lapse away from the potential inherent in human civilization. Some of the villagers in the jungle, especially Silindu, progress momentarily to a level of consciousness, and make an ill-starred attempt at intentional control over their lives—but this is swiftly departed from, and the jungle returns to fill the vacuum. Again, Schiller speaks of this at the outset of his essay: "Man is the being that wills....

For this reason nothing is so unworthy of man than to suffer violence, for violence undoes him. Who ever offers us violence calls into question nothing less than our humanity; whoever suffers this cravenly throws humanity away. But this claim to absolute liberation from everything violent seems to presuppose a being possessing force enough to repel every other force from itself. If it is claimed by a being who does not occupy the highest rank in the realm of force, an unhappy contradiction arises thence between aspiration and capacity.

The principal significance of this for Silindu is the idea that he would never have been able to succeed in willing significant change in his life: he could never have been that "being possessing force enough to repel every other force from itself," because he could never have begun to "occupy the highest rank in the realm of force." Thus his attempt to assume that rank momentarily in the act of murder is in effect an "unhappy contradiction . . . between aspiration and capacity"—all Silindu can do is lash out violently, aspiring to make himself more human, but capable only of making himself less so.

It is significant and intentional here that I am illustrating Schiller's abstractions with a case drawn from fiction—from an aesthetic, rather than an explicitly factual reality. Woolf, too, is making a point through the rhetoric of his novel. In other times and places he employs other rhetorics—perhaps with greater coherence and stability—but here he has chosen to make this particular argument in an aesthetic context as if to strive for himself and for his audience toward an aesthetic education on the evils of imperialism. The fiction allows him access to an affective appeal which would not otherwise be available in a more expository polemic. It allows more immediate access to the human dimension of the problems he describes and evokes, and to the shared dilemma of imperialism common to the humans on either side of the text—characters and readers alike. As the lives of the villagers represent various tragic follies of both victims and oppressors, the text as an aesthetic and organic whole represents analogous tragedies of both subject peoples and imperialist governors alike. In this aesthetic

context, in short, man's inhumanity to man and Woolf's admonitions are all the more resonant.

The path toward humanity, then, is not the path upon which the villagers find themselves, tangled up as they are in the violence of the hunt, debt, fear, and hunger. Neither is the path toward humanity the path of imperialism, which proceeds by larger scale versions of the same violence. It is not the path even of those violent nationalists who endeavor, as Silindu does only once, to fight their way to a new society. And also, it is not the path of those writers who, in the polemic of social reform, or the precise language of political economy, or the systematic rhetoric of any non-imaginative scenario of an improved future, fail to vivify with sufficient appeal the human need for change. In other words, it would seem here in the implications of Woolf's case that some affective, aesthetic dimension should be part of any process committed to civilizing a world, a process which begins by combating the notion that it is governed by sublime unknowable processes.

Thus Woolf's use of the sublime is closer in sense to Schiller's ideas than to those of Burke, Hume, and Kant, mainly because of the dimension of "aesthetic education." The earlier eighteenth century sublime is usually cast in something like contrast with the beautiful, although in Schiller the relationship between the two is more intertwined: aesthetic education allows for the exercise of a certain freedom of choice in one's attitudes toward the unknowable purposes of the world. In other words, the poet is the highest form of human being, capable of the highest degree of perception and articulation—aesthetic, moral, and metaphysical.<sup>7</sup>

I do not know whether Woolf ever read Schiller, but he displayed through his life a confidence in the moral value of aesthetic education in something of the sense meant by Schiller. This is discussed in his autobiography: "My feelings with regard to communal justice and mercy and toleration and liberty are both ethical and aesthetic," he writes, "and it is this combination which gives to my feeling about what I call civilisation both its intensity and also a kind of austerity...."

<sup>7</sup> See Schiller, "Letters" (1795), *Naive...* (1795); Diltthey (1958), VI, 116: "Thus poetry was accorded the autonomous potentiality of apprehending life and the world: it was elevated to an instrument of understanding of the world and set at the side of religion and science. The first to undertake the articulation in a formula of the nature of this aesthetic originality was Schiller"; Shelley (1821): "Poetry is that which comprehends all science, and that to which all science must be referred"; and Wordsworth, ed. Owen and Smyser (1974), p. 82: "What is [genius] but an advance, or a conquest, made by the soul of a poet?". For different conceptions of the sublime and nature, see Auden (1951); Forster "The Unbuilt City" (1951); Raban (1992); de la Mare (1930).

## RHETORIC AND ANXIETY

HOW, IN MORE DETAIL, can Woolf's manipulations of the rhetoric of realism be said to function specifically as *precursors*? Are they better described as evasions? And how exactly are they waiting to be made explicit or apprehended by later writing? The realism serves a certain purpose, which is to achieve an imaginative sympathy with the victims of social disadvantage, oppression, and incoherence—an imaginative sympathy with those whose perceptions and language are insufficient to communicate to others, even to themselves, their actual needs. But this construction of critical and social realism succumbs to its own momentum and returns the reader, and his or her sympathies, to closure in the evil sublime—that blindness with which the text began. An escape from this is simultaneously intimated and confounded in the text. We can approach a clearer depiction of this anxiety by continuing to examine the role of the realism of the text as a whole, and by noticing, along with what it does tell, what it does not. For the effort to depict in fiction what is true in real life is an equally desirous and frustrated agenda: always something will be missing, absent—and often, in this, lies the potential of a text to be a precursor for the simple reason that it provides unfinished business to be dealt with by a subsequent text.

Woolf's novel is an exposition of the dangers inherent in lack of communication and knowledge between people of radically different social structures, even within a single society. That society can be as small as a village, or as vast as an empire, but there is inevitably random, unjustifiable, and capricious violence when communication ceases to occur. In this, as we have said, Woolf's realist novel is sharing in an analysis of empire which had already begun and which was growing with the century—an analysis, conducted at first almost entirely within the metropolis and with resources of its own devising, which was very slowly coming to realize that it could not proceed beyond a certain point in its process of self-understanding without admitting evidence of a new sort. There had always been plenty of evidence from the field, but a new sort of evidence was emerging which offered intimate glimpses of the lives of people, not ethnographic details of the behavior patterns of subjects. Part of that analysis took the form of nationalist agitation and political and social reform within Indian political and social institutions;<sup>8</sup> part emanated as expressions in endemic culture. Woolf's text, emerging from the imperial metropolis, but operating deep within the endemic culture,

<sup>8</sup> See McLane, ed. (1970); Chatterji (1986).

speaks in counterpoint with other new evidence. But absent from Woolf's text are any signs of specific engagement with the terms of this debate. His realism does not extend as far as depicting intrusions of nationalism or reform in the lives of his villagers. What then, is the role of Woolf's social realism in the context of the very real emerging social engagements of his day? It has to do with making the appeal of the larger debates more immediate and less theoretical, more human and less humanistic. It has to do with translating India into immediate, human terms—instead of merely imperial ones—which would resonate all the way back home in England.

The absence in Woolf's text functions at many levels to strengthen it. His case recalls that of Elizabeth Gaskell, as discussed in the Introduction, who even though a lesser novelist or social commentator than her great contemporaries Dickens, Eliot, Cobden, or Mill possessed a uniquely powerful resonance. Woolf becomes significant in the context of English literature and critiques of imperialism in that even without the intense imagination of Forster or Kipling, and without the confident assertiveness of reformers and critics of imperialism like George Orwell or Edmund Candler, he did have one great advantage over the others: he lived quite significantly closer to what he described. His closeness—achieved in great degree by accidents of character and perceptiveness—allowed him to achieve communication with his subject and to understand the perils of acting without it, in the immediate theater of fiction as well as in the larger theater of imperial administration and international government. And though he lived no closer to his subject than Gandhi, say, or Ambedkar he was an Englishman who could say much of what these Indians said.<sup>9</sup> That, in the event, had a wider resonance in England.

Certainly other Britons perceived what Woolf perceived, others lived among their subjects or stayed longer among them than the average travel writers, others understood the challenges of communicating without proper detailed knowledge; but the difference in Woolf's case is one of social prosperity, and therefore, of the immediacy of urgent social morality. The anti-imperialist writings of Candler (1874-1926) and Orwell (1909-1950), Forster's *Hill of Devi*, J. R. Ackerley's (1896-1967) *Hindoo Holiday*, the detailed work of the Orientalist scholars over two centuries, the sympathetic administrative policies of the John Malcolm (1769-1833), Thomas Munro (1761-1827), and Thomas Metcalfe (1785-1846), Mountstuart Elphinstone (1779-1859), the revisionary Utilitarianism of mid-nineteenth century civil servants and jurists such as

<sup>9</sup> Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar (1892-1956), advocate for the outcaste peoples of India, author (1969).

The visions of civilisation and the partial, hesitating, fluctuating activation of these visions in the barbarous history of man, and the classical instances in which individuals have risked everything in a fight for justice, mercy, toleration, and liberty against the entrenched forces of kings and emperors, states and establishments, principalities and powers, all these have always given me not only an intense feeling about what is good and bad, what is right and wrong, but also the kind of emotion which I get still more powerfully from a play of Sophocles or Shakespeare, the Parthenon or the Acropolis, a picture of Piero della Francesca, a cello suite of Bach or the last movement of the last piano sonata of Beethoven. (*Journey...*, p. 166-169)

It is upon this aesthetic understanding, in its intense austerity, that Woolf's anti-imperialism is based. At the time of writing *The Village in the Jungle* these understandings were ill-formed, but in the rhetoric of an evil sublime, and by implication and analogy, an imperial sublime, Woolf approaches the sense that through aesthetic means will barbarism best be confounded—that through an imaginative novel itself concerned to demonstrate at least a momentary deconstruction of the sublime will a truly resonant, human, and civilized critique of empire be made.

*The Village in the Jungle* suggests this in its inscription of an intertwining suspicion of and submission to the evil imperial sublime—which it strives rationally to expose as mere human folly and greed, but to which it itself can be said to succumb. Though it offers no suggestion for dealing with folly and greed, no utopic vision to replace its somewhat dystopic one, it evokes through pathos and sentiment—in this case extreme extensions of its realism—the moral vacuum in which the lives of real people are led. Thus in this way is the village in the jungle an analog of empire: in its comprehension of a race and culture radically different from the one from which it was written, it illustrates many of the urgent social and moral challenges which that dominant culture has not begun to confront systematically—and it offers, in its rhetoric of affective realism, an essentially aesthetic approach to those challenges. In a way, and before its time, it approaches a comprehension of a multicultural society in general, in which the perception through literature of essential inequalities and abuses can become the motivating factor for change. However, what is perhaps more significant is that it is essentially inadequate to its task—the realism ultimately suggests and evokes the failure of its own vision. The question now is whether a discourse of collapse can be seen as productive of other, less anxious rhetorics. In other words, in what specific ways is this a precursor text to the postcolonial texts which will announce this agenda more explicitly.



Alfred Lyall (1835-1911), Henry Maine (1822-1888), and James Fitzjames Stephen (1829-1894), all the Accounts and Histories and Minutes<sup>10</sup>—all these writings concern Indian peoples less specifically victimized by their own specific social organization, and often treat of their subject in a relatively detached, general way. These writers knew their subjects less intimately, less *humanly*, than Woolf did. Even Forster's intimate sympathy with the Maharajah of Dewas represents a reified erotic, confined in a parodic discourse of aristocracy in decline—it is utterly alienated from the mass of people who truly and more constantly need basic things. The episodes of sexual experimentation and sadism which form a subtext to *The Hill of Devi* evince this alienation clearly; much the same can be said of Ackerley, as well.<sup>11</sup> Malcolm Darling's *The Punjab in Prosperity and Debt* (1925) comes perhaps closer than any other text of Woolf's time, or from before, to apprehending its subject—but it is clinically prosaic and evokes no imaginative sympathy. It participates in the analysis of empire in a fashion perhaps too close to the utilitarian tradition of interpretation in which appeals based on generalizations and statistics perpetuate narrow habits of thought even as they are ostensibly attempting to present a broader view. Remember George Eliot's claim for the special status of fiction in which “a picture of human life such as a great artist can give surprises even the trivial and the selfish into that attention to what is apart from themselves, which may be called the raw material of moral sentiment.” In this light, Woolf's fiction has the advantage over more systematic writing in conveying its subject and its subjects' needs, not only to a wider audience, but also at a deeper level of resonance with its actual agenda. Furthermore, it need not be the work of a “great artist” to achieve this resonance—and in fact may well be better in this context for being less great.

For indeed, aside from the absence of any specific engagement with the anti-imperial polemics of the day, or with nationalist politics, or with any other metropolitan suspicions over the virtues and values of empire, Woolf's text contains at its heart certain absences of form and content—to be discussed below—which deprive it of what Eliot might have called greatness, but which nonetheless contribute to an understanding of the text as a subtle argument against empire and a precursor to stronger arguments of a more developed sort in the postcolonial cultural theory of a later time.

<sup>10</sup> Candler (1900, 1905, 1910); Orwell (1934, 1950); Forster (HD, 1953); Ackerley (1932); Malcolm (1823, 1826, 1833); Munro (1881); Gleig (1830); Beaglehole (1966); Metcalfe (1802), (1855); Elphinstone (1814, 1821, 1824, 1887); Lyall (1899, 1915); Maine (1876, 1883); Stephen (1872, 1872); Inden (1990); Philips (1961).

<sup>11</sup> Forster, “Kanaya” in (HD, pp. 317-324); Suleri (1991), ch. 6; Doll (1992), ch. 7.

The strength of *The Village in the Jungle* is that it manages with a small range of effects to convey some sense of the basic issues of the early twentieth century social situation in the subsistence economies of village communities in the Subcontinent, and through the rhetoric of that realism to project a revisionary understanding of imperialism in general. But Woolf's anxious instinct to be something more than a mere chronicler drags his text away from the realism upon which it is founded and is a source of weaknesses in the novel. These weaknesses are interesting precisely because they are products of an instinct for social comment above and beyond the aesthetics of fiction. They are not merely weaknesses in Woolf's technique as a fledgling novelist, and in fact, they do not much detract from the aesthetic felicities of the novel. Rather they are symptomatic of certain difficulties and challenges of expression, specific rhetorical anxieties faced by Woolf and other imaginative writers concerned to explore the social problems of empire in the English novel. Woolf's resourcefulness in apprehending and rising to these challenges is worthy enough of comment. But also, his strategies for accommodating and subverting them reflect the limitations he perceived of approaching vast social and political problems in the aesthetic medium of the realist novel. Thus Woolf's case contributes to the polyphonic argument of this thesis, that his anxieties suggested the need for alternative rhetorics with which to represent both those anxieties and the still-unfocused vision of what might mollify them.

Ultimately the largest evasion of the text is its refusal to make—or the simple absence of—any explicitly socio-political critique of imperialism. What are we to make of this in a text which makes such a strong implied critique of imperialism, or is this critique so strongly implied after all? We have, at any rate, Woolf's own testimony as authority for the idea, contained in the passage below in which he frankly avows first his ambivalence toward imperialism and then, most significantly, how this connects with the writing of his novel:

When I first came out [to Ceylon] I had very few political opinions and had given little or no thought to the problems of imperialism. But my seven years in the Service had made me more and more doubtful whether I liked the prospect of spending my whole life as an imperialist ruling non-Europeans. After six months in England, all my doubts had vanished and I sent in my resignation from the Ceylon Civil Service [May 1912]. The first thing which I did after that was to write *The Village in the Jungle*.<sup>12</sup>

The questions to ask now involve how the writing of the novel was influenced by those seven years in the Service and their particular developing "doubts" about

<sup>12</sup> "Preface" to *Diaries*, p. lxxviii.

imperialism. The potential or inadequacy of Woolf's novel to suggest other texts—the absences and evasions which successor texts will occupy and stabilize—depend upon the specific structure, method, and detail of the realism of *The Village in the Jungle*.

## REALISM AND SENTIMENT

WOOLF SAW his subject daily, for over seven years (November 1904—May 1911) in Ceylon, and lived intensely within and beside it for three (August 1908—May 1911) as Assistant Government Agent in the village of Hambantota along the south-eastern coast of the island. His subject was the life of the victims of hunger, fear, injustice, poverty, and oppression. These victims were also his “subjects” as a civil service administrator. Woolf beheld these things within the jewel of the imperial crown, within that sector of British social control which was at once the most splendid achievement of capitalist-imperial expansion in human history and an avatar of the tensions and barbarities at its core.

Indeed, while the Subcontinent had been conceived of by many as a school of political and economic experimentation,<sup>13</sup> for Woolf it was a real place. In this, and in his time, he was nearly unique—certainly extraordinary. Michael Ondaatje remarks in his 1981 memoir *Running in the Family* that apart from Woolf “very few foreigners truly knew where they were.”<sup>14</sup>

It is not insignificant, perhaps, that Woolf formed his impressions in Ceylon instead of India. There at least the history of oppression and acquisition had been far less involuted; fewer justifications and legitimations had cloaked naked capitalist aggression; also, there had been much less violence.<sup>15</sup> To each of its succeeding generations of conquerors and controllers (Dravidian Tamil, Aryan Sinhalese, Arabian, Dutch, Portugese, French, English) the island remained less an imperial acquisition than a source for marketable goods: tea, spices, indigo, hemp, pearls and other jewels. Woolf’s purpose there was fairly clear-cut: to protect and foster the interests of British trade and to administer justice at a prescribed level.<sup>16</sup> At his posting in Hambantota he lived virtually alone for almost 3 years, outside the expatriate colonial society so often

<sup>13</sup> See Inden (1990); Stokes (1959); Majeed (1992); Phillips (1961).

<sup>14</sup> Ondaatje (1982), p. 83. Compare Knox (1681) and Baldaeus (1672) on Europeans living in Ceylon; Skinner (1974) for another first-hand account; Knowles (1924-26) on the headman system; Goonetilleke (1988) on Woolf’s sympathetic understanding of villagers; Ahmad (1972), another realist novel of village life. Contrast Smythe (1932), p. 9: “Books about India mostly fall into two classes, those authoritative volumes backed by ‘the experience of a lifetime,’ which render criticism impertinent, and the superficial, though often vivid impressions of the tourist which have a pictorial value, unless he plunges beyond his depth and ventures detailed criticism of what he scarcely understands, or makes those trivial slips which cumulatively ruin his book.”

<sup>15</sup> See *Letters*, p. 58, and *Growing*, p. 92. See also *Ceylon Historical Journal*, Oct 1974 and *Diaries in CHJ*, Jul 1959-Apr 1960, pp. viii-xxix, and on Woolf in Hambantota, pp. xxxiv-xxxix; and reviews of *Diaries in Pacific Affairs*, v. 35, 1962, p. 430, and *Western Political Quarterly*, v. 16, 1963, p. 258.

<sup>16</sup> Contrast *Growing*, pp. 55-61; and *Diaries*, pp. xxvii, 30n.

the subject of subsequent satire (in Forster, for example, and in Candler and Orwell).<sup>17</sup> The character of his role in Hambantota, as much as the character of the village itself, informs his picture of village life in his novel.

More significant, though, than any correspondences with the reality of his experiences as a Civil Service administrator in Ceylon,<sup>18</sup> is the rhetoric of Woolf's realism. Comment on *The Village in the Jungle* often begins with some attention to his truth to life.<sup>19</sup> On this aspect of Woolf's writing, his nephew Quentin Bell in his 1980 Introduction to Woolf's autobiography describes that work as "an essay in veracity.... Also, and this is something different, he strove to be accurate." Bell continues,

Leonard valued intellectual probity and this was one of his grand characteristics. It was a passion which led him to noble and distinguished actions but it could sometimes be a source of weakness in that at times it prevented him from doing things that he wanted to do. Both as a novelist and as a politician he was in a way inhibited by his own honesty.

As a writer of fiction he entered that difficult and perplexing terrain in which, although truth is respected, it is sometimes best conveyed by means of falsehoods. Just as the draughtsman must, by means of a species of falsification and selection, achieve the seemingly impossible task of delineating solid objects upon a flat surface, so the writer of fiction may make his events more real by imposing upon them a form which does not, or need not, exist in nature. In *The Village in the Jungle* Leonard comes so close to direct reporting of that which he has seen that we are continually held, delighted and horrified by what he has to say. (p. ix)

In Bell's estimation, Woolf's true-to-life picture of a village in the jungle is so accurate that it is not a particularly good novel:

It need not, I feel, have been a work of fiction and would have been better if he had not imposed a fictional form upon it. As it is, the book is damaged by the necessities of a story which lacks form.... He made some other attempts at fiction but they were few and, so it seems to me, he discovered finally that it was a genre that did not suit him. (p. x)

This may be so, but the significance of Woolf's novel is not diminished by it. In fact, the novel's status as a cogent comment upon empire, as we have discussed immediately above and in the Introduction, is to some degree dependent upon it. Its realism as a work of fiction invites speculation on the aesthetic appeal of its rational, social, and moral argument to readers of the English language who in the time of its composition did not normally have access to such an argument.

<sup>17</sup> See *Growing*, pp. 17, 41.

<sup>18</sup> For details of the correspondences between the texts of Woolf's official diaries and his novel see Mervyn de Silva's "Introduction," to *Diaries*, pp. xlvii-lx; Mendis (1950); and 'S.C.F.' (1960).

<sup>19</sup> See Mervyn de Silva, pages lvi-lx; Clifford (1913), pp. 844-851. Reviews of VJ listed in Bibliography. Letters: D.H. Lawrence to E.M. Forster, Boulton *et al.*, eds. (1979-1993), p. 291ii; Lawrence to Frieda Lawrence in Furbank (1978), p. 11ii. See also Forster "The Indian Boom", in *Albergo Empedocle* (1971), p. 206.



Still, though truth to life is one way of approaching realism, it is not realism itself.<sup>20</sup> For though it is possible to learn from the novel truths about social history, it is not possible to read it as a document of social historiography. Woolf gives an enduring relevance to objects and conditions and feelings which would otherwise be utterly unavailable in English, and these touch us with an appeal unachievable in historiography—but they do not recreate that life in front of our eyes. The text must achieve more than a cinematic approximation of life in the village to have value as a social comment.

Woolf does describe conditions as they were with rare facility, carefully and fully. He sees with an impassive solidity which conveys at least the conviction that one is witnessing what was really there, and witnessing it not only as Woolf would have, but as the villagers would have as well. More than being merely true to life, such passages evoke, rather than merely describe, the scene in question. In the passage which follows one can feel quite clearly the relief and exultation, so rare in the village in the jungle, brought by a little rain in the good season. Local names for plants are given in such a way as communicates their appearance to those who are unfamiliar with them, as well as their effect on the scene as a whole; there is audible sound in the writing, and vivid action. It is a fine example of realist description, and a refreshingly optimistic one in an otherwise gloomy fictive world:

There had been rain during the night, and the jungle was fresh and green. That freshness, which the time of rain brings for so brief a time, was upon all things. The jungle was golden with the great hanging clusters of the cassia flowers. The bushes were starred with the white karambu flowers, and splashed with masses of white and purple kettan. The grey monkeys leapt, shrieking and mocking, from bough to bough; the jungle was filled with the calling of the jungle fowl and the wild cries of the peacocks. From the distance came the trumpeting and shrieking of a herd of elephants. As Punchi Menika passed a bush she heard from behind it the clashing of horns. Very quietly she peered round. Two stags were fighting, the tines of the horns interlocked; up and down, backwards and forwards, snorting, panting, and straining they struggled for the doe which stood grazing quietly beside. Punchi Menika had crept up very quietly; but the doe became uneasy, lifted her head and looked intently at the bush behind which Punchi Menika crouched. She approached the bush slowly, stamping the ground angrily from time to time, and uttering the sharp shrill cry of alarm. But the bucks fought on, up and down the open space. Punchi Menika laughed as she turned away. 'Fear nothing, sister,' she said, 'there is no leopard crouching for you. Fight on, brothers, for the prize is fair.' (VJ, p. 46-47)

<sup>20</sup> Iser (1974), p. 103: "Even a novel that is called realistic can present no more than particular aspects of a given reality, although the selection must remain implicit in order to cloak the author's ideology."

This evocation sets the scene for what is about to happen: Punchi Menika's first sexual encounter with her future husband, Babun. The proleptic mood of exhilaration allows the description of the actual coitus to be more suggestive, teasing, inexplicit. Because of what has come before—bucks sparring over an uneasy doe in the flower cascades of the bright spring jungle—we need nothing more to envision this encounter than the little we are given: "A cry broke from her, in which joy and desire mingled with the fear and the pain: 'Aiyo! Aiyo!'" (VJ, p. 49).

We see from this scene that mere description is not the principal strength of the text. To praise Woolf for being faithful to the facts is to miss the knowledge that his power lies not so much in a fidelity to objects and scenes, but in a fidelity to feelings. In the following description of Hinnihami's death of a broken heart, factual details convey the full sense of what her grief means—a *szujet*, a poetic ordering, emerges from the brute chronology of a *fabula*; a plot is fleshed out from the mere story.<sup>21</sup> Her pet deer, like a son and friend to her, has just been stoned and beaten by the villagers who think of it and her as devils:

Hinnihami was unhurt but she was stunned by the violence of anger and horror.... Then gradually a sense only of dull despair settled upon her. She sat through the long day unconscious of the passing of time. She was unaware when the deer died; she knew that he was dead now, and that with him everything had died for her. There was nothing for her to live for now, and already she felt life slipping from her. She thought of the child who had died too: she had missed her, and grieved for her, but she had never loved the child as she loved the deer....

She was found by Silindu the next morning, still sitting naked by the body of the deer, her hair wet with the dew, and her limbs stiff with the chill of the jungle at night. He tried in vain to rouse her. She recognised him. 'Let me be, Appochchi,' she kept repeating. 'Let me die here, for he is dead. Let me die here, Appochchi.'

Then Silindu wrapped her cloth about her, and carried her in his arms to the house. She cried a little when she felt his tears fall upon her, but after that she showed no more signs of grief. She lay in the house, silent, and resigned to die. She had even ceased to think or feel now. Life had no more a hold upon her, and in the hour before dawn in deep sleep she allowed it to slip gently from her. (VJ, p. 141-2)

The sentimental device of tears "touching" another to grief, the zeugmatic imagery of Hinnihami stripped of clothes as well as any reason to live; the actual death of the deer in the interstices between sentences and tenses; the affective memories of her child; the metonymy of a covering cloth for a shroud—these rhetorical details underline the willfulness of Hinnihami's act of dying, gently, with the night, in her own time and for her own reasons. In the realism of the text, her grief is the very locus of her

<sup>21</sup> See Forster (AN, p. 60): "We have defined a story as a narrative sequence of events. A plot is also a narrative of events, the emphasis falling on causality. 'The king died and then the queen died' is a story. 'The king died and then the queen died of grief' is a plot."

individuality—it is her identity, her consciousness and intent, her aspirations and capacity—and as she exercises it she participates in an act of both aesthetic and social resonance.

Hinnihami is significant for being an individual, more strongly even than her father, in the midst of uniformity and the immolation of will. She has a temper which accords her respect, a “violence of feeling” which is her principal distinguishing characteristic and her unique resource: “You could see this in her eyes.... The village women . . . soon learned to respect the passionate anger which it was so easy to rouse in Hinnihami” (VJ, p. 66). Woolf illustrates this trait, rather than just informing us of it: “It was always remembered in the village how, when Angohami once, worked up by the bitterness of her own tongue, raised her hand against Punchi Menika, Hinnihami, then a child of eight, had seized the baby which the woman was carrying on her hip and flung it into the tank water.” This illustration, furthermore, seems a symptomatic warning of the perils of ungoverned discourse of any sort provoking a passionate force to an act of hurtful reprisal—it is a prefiguration of Silindu’s own act of defiant violence, of nationalist agitation, of a cataclysmic end to imperial tyranny.

Hinnihami is aware and powerful to the extent of being able to will her own death in the face of not simply her grief for the deer, but of a lifetime of grief and general victimization leading up to it. Through Hinnihami (and her associations with Schiller’s notion of will) we begin to understand this process of victimization. Also her life is seen as that much more of a waste in its loss for having been brought that much closer to us. Because Woolf is so sensitive to individual response in all its complexity he is able to evoke more than simple sensibility, and to convey something of the bigger movements of which these individual people are a small part. One can understand, through this text, a part of imperial social history as it is best understood, in the skin of the people who lived it.

The broad vision which frames the novel as a whole is revealed at the outset. The natural description of the jungle as featureless, flat, and malevolent stands in contrast to a tradition of exotic description which represents Ceylon as Serendip, the Cinnamon Isle, a pendant jewel off the ear of India.<sup>22</sup> The tone of natural description is given in a tone of utter turgidity and flatness—Woolf is creating an anti-idyll, a black dell in a malevolent Sylvania, a negative space which has virtually no identity of its own beyond being not-jungle:

<sup>22</sup> Ondaatje (1982), pp. 63-4, 79-86.

The village was called Beddagama, which means the village in the jungle. It lay in the low-country or plains, midway between the sea and the great mountains which seem, far away to the north, to rise like a long wall straight up from the sea of trees. It was in, and of, the jungle; the air and smell of the jungle lay heavy upon it—the smell of hot air, of dust, and of dry and powdered leaves and sticks. Its beginning and its end was in the jungle, which stretched away from it on all sides unbroken, north and south and east and west, to the blue line of the hills and to the sea. The jungle surrounded, overhung it, continually pressed in upon it. It stood at the door of the houses, always ready to press in upon the compounds and open spaces, to break through the mud huts, and to choke up the tracks and paths. It was only by yearly clearing with axe and katty that it could be kept out. It was a living wall about the village, a wall which, if the axe were spared, would creep in and smother and blot out the village itself. (VJ, p. 1-2)

The novel begins with this anti-idyll, and in fact ends with it; in a clearing in and of the jungle lies the village—all that happens therein will be determined by that intimacy. This frame reveals, as will other rhetorical aspects of the text, that any excursion of civilization upon the jungle is momentary, and will be followed by a return to the enveloping sublime.

Again the text also suggests that this absorption comes about not through some elemental power of the sublime over civilization, but through the flaws and illusions of that attempt at civilization itself—an insufficient attempt at wrestling order from chaos which falls back in on itself, even forgetting its own vision of the quality of its failure. How is this suggestion conveyed? Basically, through modes of sentimental and realist rhetoric through which the emotional characterization and political vision of the novel are connected. The narrative of these small people reflects upon the narrative of vast historical changes such as the development and decline of imperialism under pressures and corruptions of its own making. Thus Woolf develops his sense of the conflation of civilizations and barbarism into an evocation of the amorality at the heart of the imperial project—the absence of any true civilizing element, and the presence instead of a momentary illusion of permanence and human achievement. The ligaments between the concerns of the village in the jungle and the concerns of imperialism in general are never drawn; they are left implicit so that the emotional accessibility will not be hindered by an explicit social appeal. Furthermore, the implication is clearest from a postimperial vantage point, in which the moral and cultural vacuum at the heart of the imperial project—empire as anti-civilization—is the principal assumption, the constant elaboration. Woolf's text prepares the way for these, for the illuminations and revisions of postcolonialism, and is their precursor.

The question remains *how* specifically did this ambivalence find expression in Woolf's writing—how did anxiety manifest itself in rhetoric? Are there passages of

text, either in the novel or elsewhere, which indicate this? The novel itself indicates a state of social degradation which we have read here as a general analog of a degraded imperialism; this is conveyed through infringements on the rhetoric of realism. Beyond discussing these infringements, are there other, more specific aspects of text which indicate Woolf's views, and which might help to situate him within a category of precursors to postcolonialism? In fact, a far more explicit, if still anxiously ambivalent anti-imperialism is to be found in two of Woolf's "Stories of the East"—short fiction written just after *The Village in the Jungle* in October 1912 and dealing with more immediate issues of colonialism and the British in India.<sup>23</sup> They narrate uncomfortable, appalling scenes of colonial life, specifically the interaction of the British with native peoples. They do so in an anxious, unconfident way; they are specifically suspicious of the power of fiction, and especially the novel, to convey a right understanding of the relevant issues and to communicate the moral crisis of imperialism. If an explicit critique of imperialism is absent from *The Village in the Jungle* it is entirely present in the stories. The novel presents the interdependence of anxiety and rhetoric; "A Tale Told by Moonlight" and "Pearls and Swine", in the service of conveying utter despair over imperialism, present an actual rhetoric of anxiety.

---

<sup>23</sup> *Stories of the East* (1921); (included in *Diaries*, pp. 253-286—edition cited). See also Rosenbaum (1994), p. 508, n. 8: "Among Leonard Woolf's papers at Sussex is another eastern story, not included in the collection, about an Englishwoman in India who is in love with the narrator.... Another fragment of a story suggests that Woolf was trying at some time to write a number of stories of the East." Also *Letters*, p. 568, Woolf to William Plomer, 12 Aug 1968, in which he mentions having begun in 1913 a novel called *The Empire Builder*.



text, either in the novel or elsewhere, which indicate this? The novel itself indicates a state of social degradation which we have read here as a general analog of a degraded imperialism; this is conveyed through infringements on the rhetoric of realism. Beyond discussing these infringements, are there other, more specific aspects of text which indicate Woolf's views, and which might help to situate him within a category of precursors to postcolonialism? In fact, a far more explicit, if still anxiously ambivalent anti-imperialism is to be found in two of Woolf's "Stories of the East"—short fiction written just after *The Village in the Jungle* in October 1912 and dealing with more immediate issues of colonialism and the British in India.<sup>23</sup> They narrate uncomfortable, appalling scenes of colonial life, specifically the interaction of the British with native peoples. They do so in an anxious, unconfident way; they are specifically suspicious of the power of fiction, and especially the novel, to convey a right understanding of the relevant issues and to communicate the moral crisis of imperialism. If an explicit critique of imperialism is absent from *The Village in the Jungle* it is entirely present in the stories. The novel presents the interdependence of anxiety and rhetoric; "A Tale Told by Moonlight" and "Pearls and Swine", in the service of conveying utter despair over imperialism, present an actual rhetoric of anxiety.

---

<sup>23</sup> *Stories of the East* (1921); (included in *Diaries*, pp. 253-286—edition cited). See also Rosenbaum (1994), p. 508, n. 8: "Among Leonard Woolf's papers at Sussex is another eastern story, not included in the collection, about an Englishwoman in India who is in love with the narrator.... Another fragment of a story suggests that Woolf was trying at some time to write a number of stories of the East." Also *Letters*, p. 568, Woolf to William Plomer, 12 Aug 1968, in which he mentions having begun in 1913 a novel called *The Empire Builder*.

## ANXIOUS RHETORIC: "STORIES OF THE EAST"

"A TALE TOLD BY MOONLIGHT" is a curiously unconfident experiment. The story is simple: Reynolds, a writer whose books are more vigorous than he, travels to Ceylon and falls in love with a prostitute named Celestinahami.<sup>24</sup> He marries her, only to realize that he has merely fallen in love with some exotic/erotic fantasy, that she and he have nothing in common, and that her love for him is "the love of a slave, the patient consuming love for a master, for his kicks and his caresses, for his kisses and his blows," (p. 263). He leaves for England and she drowns herself. Surrounding this plot is a texture of rhetorical anxieties betraying a deeply embedded suspicion of the whole imperial project and of the power of narrative fiction to convey imperialism's reprehensible side without perpetuating it in some way as well.

The tale is embedded within two framing narratives. First, it is told by a character within the 'short story' which contains it: Woolf, as it were, hears the tale from another man, Jessop. This framing device distances Woolf from the actual sentiments spoken and implied; some of these are harsh, even reprehensible, but he, it seems, is merely their conduit. Second, Jessop tells his tale to Woolf and several other appropriately literary men—a novelist, a poet, and a critic—after they have observed a carefully contrived scene of lovers kissing by the moonlit sea. The men wax lyrical on the scene, and recall the pleasures of their own youthful loves by telling other tales which we do not hear. This excites the disapproval of Jessop, who decries his fellows' sentimentality and romanticism. He begins to tell his own tale, and voices ideas which Woolf himself might be anxious to express concerning the rhetoric of fiction and the dangers of the illusions it can create: "It's you novelists who're responsible, you know" says Jessop. "You've made a world in which everyone is always falling in love—but it's not this world," (p. 256). Again, Woolf avoids making any claim to authority, as if he were anxious for his credibility, or for his ability to convey what he is trying to express—or as if what he is trying to express were his actual anxiety.

Jessop claims that real love does exist, that it is immensely rare and queer, and that he has witnessed it only twice in his life. But before he begins to tell his tale of real love, he warns that love cannot be conveyed by words or even by implications of common experience: "It's feeling, a passion immense, steady, enduring. But not one

<sup>24</sup> Heine, "Introduction" to (HD, p. xv), claims that E.M. Forster is "the obvious model for Reynolds." Compare Woolf on Forster's books: *Letters*, pp. 105, 130 and n, 141-2; and Rosenbaum (1994), pp. 395, 403, 412, 433.

person in twenty thousand ever feels anything at all for more than a second, and then it's only a feeble ripple on the smooth surface of their unconsciousness,' (p. 257). Love cannot be conveyed, only experienced, felt—and the novelists who would have it otherwise do not represent the true longing and need in the real world.

Jessop then tells his tale, emphasizing that though Reynolds as a novelist had written romantic, "psychologically clever" novels, he "had never felt anything himself" until Celestinahami (p. 258). His affair with her, significantly, is conducted entirely outside of language as neither understands the other's tongue. Within this "idyll of the East" Reynolds plans to "write novels on the verandah" (p. 262)—marginalizing and being marginalized by language and by his Orientalist perception of his exoticized situation. But he never finishes his novel, which would have been "full of strength and happiness and sun and reality—if it had been finished'." He begins to realize his situation at this point: "He was a civilized cultivated intelligent nervous little man and she—she was an animal, dumb and stupid and beautiful'," (p. 263).

Interestingly, at this point in the narrative, when he has begun to perpetuate the same category of Orientalist misperception and objectification of Celestinahami as Reynolds himself had done in possessing her—representing a Saidian co-incidence of culture and power—Jessop interrupts his narrative. The text reads: "Jessop stopped. We waited for him to go on, but he didn't. The leaves rustled gently in the breeze; the river murmured softly below us; up in the woods I heard a nightingale singing." It is as if Woolf's own anxieties are causing the narrative conceit to crumble in the face of such sentiments. Jessop does not continue, in fact, until one of his listeners prods him to go on; significantly it is Alderton the novelist who is most frustrated by the blockage in the plot and asks "Well, and then, . . . in a rather peevish voice," (p. 263).

Jessop is annoyed by the nightingale and by the other clichés of sentimental and romantic rhetoric—caressing breeze, babbling brook—just as he had been by the first tales being told in the moonlight. He protests, "I wish I hadn't begun this story'," and then qualifies his anxiety about being a narrator by pointing to how anxious it makes him *feel*, the telling as well as the tale: "It happened so long ago: I thought I had forgotten to feel it, to feel that I was responsible for what happened'," (p. 263).

Finally, in a last protest against the devices of sentimental fiction, Jessop tells of how he helped Reynolds extricate himself from Celestinahami. He lapses into an insistently un-sentimental rhetoric, the rhetoric of the law—although this itself is significantly fractured, unconfident, and in the end ironic:

She was well provided for; a deed was executed: the house and the coconut trees and the little compound by the sea were to be hers—a generous settlement, a *donatio inter vivos*, as the lawyers call it—void, eh?—or voidable?—because for an immoral consideration. Lord! I'm nearly forgetting my law, but I believe the law holds that only future consideration of that sort can be immoral. How wise, how just, isn't it? The past cannot be immoral; it's done with, wiped out—but the future? Yes, it's only the future that counts. (p. 264)

But even Jessop (or Woolf?) cannot resist a last sentimental flourish. In his final paragraph he describes Celestinahami's suicide, her body decked in the western clothes she had bought in a misguided attempt to gain Reynolds' respect: "She lay there [at the inquest] in her stays and pink skirt and white stocking and white shoes. They had found her floating in the sea that lapped the foot of the convent garden below the little bungalow—bobbing up and down in her stays and pink skirt and white stockings and shoes'," (p. 264). Jessop, as fine a raconteur as any novelist, stops his tale at this rather well turned phrase—skillfully eliminating one repetition of the word "white" before the last mention of shoes, to improve the rhythm. One of his listeners, not Woolf but "Smith, Hanson Smith, the critic" has the last word and ends the actual text: "Battle, murder, and sentimentality," he said. 'You're as bad as the rest of them Jessop. I'd like to hear your other case—but it's too late, I'm off to bed'," (p. 264).

The juxtaposition of sentiment with realism, filtered through the ironic reversal at the end which itself may serve to protect Woolf from the sentimentality to which even Jessop has succumbed, and the anxious rhetorical disruptions, all combined within the protective framing devices—these details indicate Woolf's multiple anxieties about what he perceives as an inexorable Orientalist tendency of the British in the East to objectify what they see and do in relation to the native peoples.<sup>25</sup> The domination of and disillusionment with Celestinahami as exotic/erotic object show Reynolds as Orientalist; Jessop's narrative and his interpretation of Reynold's situation show him as Orientalist in perception and expression alike. He even comments at one point that stories told to him by Celestinahami and the other prostitutes of how they had drifted "into this hovel in the warren of filth and smells which we and our civilization had attracted about us" reminded him "somehow of the Arabian Nights'," (p. 260). The texture of narrative is itself both exotic and disillusioning. This subsequent tale, however anxiously it resists

<sup>25</sup> Compare Colmer (1975), p. 63, on the ironic voice in Forster: "The author's irony . . . is not cynical, but salutary and necessary. It represents the free play of the rational mind on all the materials of experience. It is the expression of a mind attached to no system of fixed values, open to many forms of experience. At every turn and corner irony corrects and keeps in check imaginative excesses or flights of fancy. It neither denies nor disavows the truths of the imagination, but it preserves the author from sentimentality.... Most important of all it quietly calls in question the simple oppositions on which the plot rests."

sentimentality and closure and nightingales and white shoes—figures of an avowedly Western rhetoric of tragedy imposed on the East—cannot convey the human tragedy of the situation without relying on an over-determined, inescapable Orientalist rhetoric. Furthermore, this rhetoric is distracting and inadequate to the task, and it fails to move at least one critic, Hanson Smith, who gets up and goes to sleep. Jessop's frustrations are not palliated by the distant Woolf. At the end of the story, one is left with a sense of general disaffection and gloom—not so much over empire as over the task of representing the crisis of empire in words.

BEFORE MOVING ON to "Pearls and Swine", some further discussion is needed of the erotic dimension evoked in "A Tale Told by Moonlight"—not so much the erotic Orientalism already referred to (a very well documented phenomenon<sup>26</sup>), but the evidence in Woolf's correspondence and autobiography for his own collusion in aspects of that erotic, his susceptibility to it derived from a latent misogyny, and the expression of those tendencies in his writings.

Over the seven years he spent in Ceylon, Woolf was working through a specific sort of misogyny he shared with many of his fellow Cambridge Apostles, some of whom were homo- or bisexual and curiously conflicted about women.<sup>27</sup> Woolf's first sexual activity occurred in Ceylon and was tinged with a barely sublimated sense of alienation from and hostility toward women. This is evidenced in his correspondence with Strachey from Ceylon (1904-1911): letters concerning sexual angst, copulation, women, and male desire frustrated by an unworthy or retreating "object"-woman, are generated by the 'homosocial' context of the Apostles.<sup>28</sup> Woolf's sexual debut occurred with "a halfcaste whore," and seems not to have been satisfying: "the elaborate

<sup>26</sup> See, for example, Theweliet (1989), ch. 2: "Male Bodies: Psychoanalyzing the White Terror".

<sup>27</sup> See Levy (1979); Marcus (1987), p. 177; and Hussey (1992), p. 132.

<sup>28</sup> *Letters*: 21 Mar 1906, p. 116; 10 Feb 1907, p. 124; 19 May 1907, p. 128; and in Spater and Parsons (1977): 9 Jun 1905, p. 53. It is worth remembering that Woolf's correspondent in all of these letters, Lytton Strachey, was in 1905-7 significantly depressed over the difficulties of establishing himself as a writer and had been crossed in love when Maynard Keynes stole away from him the affections of Duncan Grant (see Eder (1991), pp. 573-79). Strachey's ability to influence Woolf's mood was considerable; Noel Annan notes this in his review of *Letters*, 1990, pp. 28-30: "The power of Strachey's personality distorted the personae of his correspondents." Strachey himself seemed aware of this, writing to Woolf on 2 Feb 1906, *Letters* p. 112: "I wonder if future readers—if there are any, will think our gloom justifiable." See also *Growing*, pp. 61-2: "My letters to Lytton of this period are extremely gloomy. Diaries and letters almost always give an exaggerated, one-sided picture of the writer's state of mind.... And when it is a letter that one is writing to an intimate friend of one's youth, the passion and prejudices of youth which were so important a part of that friendship exaggerate and distort the picture of our reactions to entirely new circumstances."



absurdity made me almost impuissant from amusement."<sup>29</sup> He nearly became engaged to an earnest female riding companion, but after "a strange, painful feeling came over" him, declined to propose.<sup>30</sup> However, he and Strachey eventually evolved away from this stagnant fear of women; by 1909 Strachey was avidly encouraging Woolf to propose to Virginia Stephen.<sup>31</sup> Woolf's long, fraught courtship of Virginia, his resignation from the Ceylon Civil Service (which he postponed until her response), and their eventual marriage coincided with his commitment to a career as a writer and her parallel commitment. Furthermore, Virginia's early experimentation with form in the composition of *The Voyage Out* and its first version *Melymbrosia*, and Leonard's early fiction-making decisions may have been related to sexual tensions.<sup>32</sup> Virginia's 1914 mental collapse shortly after her marriage has been attributed partly to sexual pressures and an emerging consciousness of childhood sexual abuse—although this is a tendentious claim.<sup>33</sup> Nonetheless, despite Virginia and Vanessa's own efforts to become liberated sexually, and despite the absence in Virginia's own work, letters, and diaries of explicit reference to sexual abuse, one can regard as significant such details as the physical disgust felt at the sight and idea of heterosexual copulation in *The Voyage Out*. Interestingly, this is mirrored in Leonard's almost precisely contemporaneous *The Wise Virgins*.<sup>34</sup> The misogyny of Leonard's text is almost painful—he may well have been exacerbated by Virginia's sexual refusals and, during her breakdown, her vicious ravings against men and him in particular.<sup>35</sup> Significantly, Leonard abandoned fiction

<sup>29</sup> *Letters*, 1 Oct 1905, p. 102. See also *Growing*, pp. 67-8, 154.

<sup>30</sup> See *Growing*, pp. 150-155, and Rudikoff (1991), pp. 311-314: "Leonard Woolf might have married one of the young women so often found in those colonial outposts passionately playing tennis."

<sup>31</sup> See correspondence with Strachey in *Letters*, pp. 146-150.

<sup>32</sup> *The Voyage Out* (1915); *Melymbrosia*, ed. and intro. by DeSalvo (1982). See also Hussey (1992), p. 127, 141-144; DeSalvo (1980). Elements of Virginia's second novel *Night and Day* also reflect these sexual tensions; see Hussey (1992), Heine (1986), and V. Woolf, *Night and Day* (1919), p. 254: Katherine Hilbery "had accepted [Ralph Denham] in a misty state of mind when nothing had its right shape or size.... She did not want to marry anyone. She wanted to go away by herself, preferably to some bleak northern moor, and there study mathematics and the science of astronomy."

<sup>33</sup> See Poole (1990), and DeSalvo (1989); also *Growing*, pp. 82, 149 on the Woolf's decision not to have children because of Virginia's illness.

<sup>34</sup> *The Voyage Out* (1915), *The Wise Virgins* (1914). See Hussey (1992), p. 132. See also, *Growing*, p. 70-72: "Just as when you see two human beings outlined against their flaming sunset, they contrive to make you see the human beings as two manikins, so too they tend to induce in me a feeling of impotence, the dwarfing and dooming of everything human in the enormous un pitying universe.... They [remind] me of those pairs of insects . . . in which a very small male is attached to a very large female—fitting ignominiously and neatly into her gigantic body—I sometimes that think this must be the ideal life for a male—and, after performing his male functions, is killed and eaten by her or just dies."

<sup>35</sup> See *Beginning Again*, p. 161, and Hussey (1992), p. 128-9: "*The Wise Virgins* is an angry and misogynistic novel that generally portrays women as unfeeling temptresses and men as helplessly

after 1915, turning instead to a great many other genres to express himself.<sup>36</sup> Some element of this decision must have involved his awareness of the emerging genius of wife's fictions—and of its intimate connection to her madness and sexual frustrations.<sup>37</sup> His own realist vocabulary, he might have felt, could not flourish so close to the rarified but clearly innovative environment of Virginia's writing; nor could his own sexual identity complement her neuroses. Neither, by extension, could the inexorable tide of general imperial oppression—social, economic, even sexual—evoked in *The Village in the Jungle* be mollified by any human agency or explicitly apprehended in the realist rhetoric of his fiction. Without dwelling any further on these connections between sexual psychology and experience and issues of genre, it is possible nonetheless to see the connections if not to invest too much significance in them—anxiety, having encouraged an expression of something approaching resistance to domination, provokes a loss of voice. With this in mind, we may move on to one of Leonard Woolf's last expressions in fiction, his awkwardly ambivalent story "Pearls and Swine".

"PEARLS AND SWINE" excited a bit of bizarre interest after it was first written. It was well received by Hamilton Fyfe in the *Daily Mail* in 1921, who said, rather unguardedly, that it would "rank with the great stories of the world."<sup>38</sup> An American literary agent got ahold of the story and discussed its marketability in an honestly crass, idiosyncratically American, and specifically significant way:

---

driven almost mad with sexual desire for them." Woolf finished and revised the novel in August 1914, during the early, acute stages of Virginia's collapse from July 1914.

<sup>36</sup> See *Letters*, to Lytton Strachey, 12 Dec 1913, p. 197: "My family think it a rotten bad book and forbid me to publish it.... I shall never write another book after these damned Virgins." Woolf did write a play "The Hotel" in 1938, "about the horrors of the twilight age of Europe"; he describes its political pessimism and its "realism and symbolism" in the introduction to the 1963 American edition, and in *Downhill...*, pp. 248-9. For Woolf's political writings see Bibliography, especially *Economic Imperialism* (1920), *Imperialism and Civilisation* (1928), *Barbarians at the Gate* (1939), *Empire and Commerce in Africa* (1920), *After the Deluge* (1931, 1939), *Principia Politica* (1953) and Memoranda to Labour Party (some in *Letters*: pp. 388-9, 393-4, 416-7, 428-30). See also Fischer (1966), (1980); Gupta (1975), Goldsworthy (1971).

<sup>37</sup> See *Beginning Again*, pp. 28-33, on Leonard's opinions about the connection between Virginia's genius and madness. On the impact of these on Leonard's fiction, see Heine (1976), pp. 448-458. Heine comments how the weakly abrupt ending of Leonard's story 'Three Jews', finished in 1913 with *The Wise Virgins* and printed together with Virginia's 'The Mark on the Wall' in the Hogarth Press' first publication (1917), suffers in contrast to his wife's work, "one of her first experiments in impressionism," p. 450. She concludes her article with this, p. 458: "His dominant mode is irony—always difficult to control; yet his sympathetic imagination, his acerbic intellect, and his acute observation far outweigh his sometimes ineffective and old-fashioned fictional techniques."

<sup>38</sup> 2 April 1921; originally reviewed in *TLS*, 14 March 1921.

'Pearls and Swine' is so great as to be terrific. It is as powerful a story as I have read in a long time.... But there are only about two magazines in America that I think would touch it. You see, we here in the States are still provincial enough to want the sugar-coated pill; we don't like facts, we don't like to have to face them. It seems to be a characteristic of the American people. And where we won't face them in our politics, in our domestic problems, in our personal lives—why in the devil should we be forced to face them in fiction? I think, fundamentally, our demand of the author is that he entertain us with his wares. We veer from the shocking, the revolting—the truth. But holy, suffering cats! how Woolf can write! I should like nothing better than to represent him . . . only if in so doing I can be of profit to both him and myself.<sup>39</sup>

The story itself concerns some of the same frustrations of form found in "A Tale Told by Moonlight", the same suspicion of sentiment, and a more explicit insistence on "facts" as opposed to sentiment as the only reliable narrative mode. Also the narrative is framed in much the same way: the tale told by an embedded narrator, more or less by moonlight, in the plush interior of a gentleman's after-dinner conversation. This time the listeners are not all literary men to be chided for their inability to express sentiments proper to imperialism; rather they are an archdeacon and a colonel who have been discussing their respective "views" on India, our anonymous listener/narrator, and the narrator of the tale himself, an Indian Civil Service veteran. After fending off the platitudes of the emblematic priest and soldier, on the grounds that neither man has ever seen the subcontinent although each claims to know "what to do with it," the ICS man establishes his authority by claiming, "'I won't give you views,' he said, 'but if you like I'll give you what you call details, things seen, facts. Then you can give me *your* views on 'em'," (p. 269).

This seems commendable, honest, judicious—a refutation of the book-learned authority of the insensitive, "Board-school" civil servant, trained on James Mill and an Area Handbook of procedure. It coincides with a critique in the tale of a young Civil Service assistant who also had "views": "'he used to explain them to me when he first arrived. He got some new ones I think before he got out.... You'd say he only saw details, things happen, facts, data'," (VJ, p. 270)—death, stench, squalor. Again, it all seems commendable, until eventually he says, almost defensively, "'I'm giving you facts: what I want, you know, too is to give you the feeling of facts out there. After all that is data for your views isn't it?'" (p. 275). The suggestion that facts cannot resonate until associated with feeling runs counter to the Gradgrind ethos of facts in the first place, which it is difficult to imagine the man truly espouses in any case. The statement

<sup>39</sup> Letter of mid-1922 from Ann Watkins to Henry Holt (both literary agents in the US), quoted in Woolf *Downhill*..., p. 89-90. One can imagine the glee with which the Woolfs received "holy suffering cats!"

is confused, confusing. It is then followed by a similar descent into basically sentimental detail about the brutal, but inexpressible reality of the imperial experience for those of Orientalist perceptions and preconceptions—but then this Orientalist rhetoric is reproduced in the telling, even as the “facts” try to dispel it. The West is spiritually blind, active but useless, lost in heuristic systems; the East is overwhelming, multitudinous, ancient; and, furthermore, never the twain shall meet. It is the Orientalism of the liberal sublime. And even in its factual detail, the East especially is described in a highly sentimental rhetoric, emphasizing how one “feels”—or smells or appears—in India as opposed to in England:

Things here feel so different; you seem so far from life, with windows and blinds and curtains always in between, and then nothing ever happens, you never wait for things to happen, never watch things happening here. You are always doing things somehow—Lord knows what they are—according I suppose to systems, views, opinions. But out there you live so near to life, every morning you smell damp earth if you splash too much in your tin bath. And things happen slowly, inexorably by fate, and you—you don’t do things, you watch with the three hundred million. You feel it there in everything, even in the sunrise and sunset, every day, the immensity, inexorableness, mystery of things happening. You feel the whole earth waking up or going to sleep in a great arch of sky; you feel small, not very powerful. But who ever felt the sun set or rise in London or Torquay either? It doesn’t: you just turn on or turn off the electric light. (p. 275)

The man’s tale concerns a pearl fishery,<sup>40</sup> a fetid and threatening environment in which oysters, gathered by thousands of fisherman of many races are left to rot in the sun until cleansed of flesh so that the pearls can be more easily removed. All of this occurs under the oversight of only two Englishmen. Another white man, named “White” in fact, a deliberately Conradian figure—a decayed public-school gentleman who has seen the dark places of the East—arrives and begins to die *in delirium tremens*. His ravings in the omnipresent smell of dead and rotting oysters are immensely unnerving: “White was also seeing things, not nice either; not snakes you know as people do in novels when they get D.T., but things which had happened to him, and things which he had done—they weren’t nice either—and curious ordinary things distorted in a most unpleasant way’,” (p. 276). As the rhetoric of the novel is discredited again, White becomes another vexed narrator: his tale is the record of imperial guilt and anxiety, veiled in the discourse of the mad. This both lends it disturbing affect and cloaks its immediacy, excusing White and whomever hears him—and of course Woolf who recounts the events—from any immediate complicity, but accusing them by association all the same. This sublimated complicity, and a semi-

<sup>40</sup> Compare *Growing*, pp. 88-98, and in *Letters*, pp. 112-117.



consciousness of it, surfaces under the gaze of innumerable "dark shadows . . . calm, impassive, stern . . . all round . . . judging, weighing'," (p. 277). The narrator, who up to this point has borne all privations with fortitude, succumbs not merely to this Orientalist rhetoric of his own, but to more immediate anxieties: "I thought I had lived long enough out there to have heard without a shock anything that men can do and do—especially white men who have 'gone under.' But I hadn't: I couldn't stomach the story of White's life told by himself," (p. 276). This narrator, like White before him and Woolf after him, is unmanned by his own story—the implications being that any white man's story is another's, that all are guilty, and that even a telling of its telling is anxiety-producing in the extreme.

Such proliferating layers of guilt and collapsing coincidences of anxiety are like the pearls hidden in decaying oysters, or like the "blood and gold" of the sunsets, or even like the goofy gothic detail of the "sharp and pointed teeth with spaces between them" in White's mouth—all of these are symptoms of the recurrent metaphors of sensual opulence and corruption which characterize the Orientalist rhetoric of any imperial narrative. Woolf and the narrator attempt to distance themselves from it, to localize it as mere data, even to render it merely a dream: "It sounds unreal, perhaps a nightmare.... The curious thing is it didn't seem a nightmare out there. It was too real'," (p. 274). But always it returns as the governing metaphor for the moral crisis of imperialism: the story is real and untellable.

The narrative ends in fact with a highly symbolic gesture which significantly strives toward comfort but achieves only a certain paternalism itself echoing the role of the kindly, ineffectual, disillusioned Englishmen. One of the Arab fishermen has died and the sheik comforts his grieving brother. The narrator tells how "he laid his hand on the head of the weeping man and spoke to him calmly, eloquently, compassionately. I didn't understand Arabic, but I could understand what he was saying. The dead man had lived, had worked, had died. He had died working, without suffering, and men should desire to die....'," (p. 278-9). This utopic vision of paternalistic benignity, with which the narration ends, is nonetheless authoritarian; this is indicated by the narrator's ability to intuit empathetically the common language of patriarchs—or is he placing words in the mouth of the sheik, another familiar Orientalist appropriation? In either case, the respect and admiration which the narrator shows for this scene, especially in contrast to the raving death of White who had collapsed after "he [had] called for someone to bring him a woman", betray his essential faith in this model of social authority derived from yet more Orientalist clichés. Delivered as they are through the



mouth of a narrator at some remove from Woolf, they speak to Woolf's own anxieties about expressing that which he is suspicious of but which he cannot seem to avoid returning to ultimately.

Following the end of this narration the story's final closure has yet to occur. The colonel is shown to have fallen asleep and the archdeacon is made to look ridiculous by stammering that surely this was an exceptional case. He may be dissembling, but he feels the closeness of the critique, of its relevance to his actual person as an imperialist. The ICS narrator speaks for Woolf to the last, ending with an oblique Tamil proverb: "When the cat puts his head into a pot, he thinks all is darkness'," (p. 279). Again, a frame is constituted as the proverb both contains and encourages the sense of encroaching anxiety generated by the multiple narratives within the text. It offers a final one: the world would not be so bad if we could draw our blind heads out of the pot of imperialism. A proverb—yet another alternative rhetoric employed in defiance of fiction—is used to marshal the vexed sensibilities which the text as a whole is trying so anxiously to convey. Coming at the end of all these other evasive devices, it helps to argue persuasively for Woolf's lack of confidence over his power to express his own ambivalences—his thoughts, experiences, feelings. It turns the final irony of the stories' weaknesses and what they indicate of Woolf's thinking into something critically useful: a clue to his many anxieties about imperialism, and about explicitly apprehending those anxieties in the rhetoric of fiction.

WOOLF'S ANXIOUS externality to these texts recalls an interesting moment in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*—a narrative also consisting of multiple frames around an inexpressible center—in which Marlow (significantly not Conrad) says, "And this also has been one of the dark places of the earth'," referring to London, the heart of an empire. The narrator Conrad then follows this abrupt remark with the observation that "to him [Marlow] the meaning of an episode was not inside like a kernel but outside enveloping the tale which brought it out only as a glow brings out a haze, in the likeness of one of those misty haloes that sometimes are made visible by the spectral illumination of moonshine."<sup>41</sup> Aside from its felicitous though distinctly different use of the image of moonlight, this statement evokes by its diction—its rhetoric as elusive

<sup>41</sup> Conrad, ed. Hynes (1992), v. 3, pp. 3-4. See McClure (1981). Also Woolf, *Growing*, p. 46: "I could never make up my mind whether Kipling had moulded his characters accurately in the image of Anglo-Indian society or whether we were moulding our characters accurately in the image of a Kipling story." See also Clifford (1984-85).

as its meaning—the vertigo which comes with the realization that there is no author governing the text from above, only a centripetal flight away from an empty center. Marlow's perception of Kurtz's horror is certainly more expressive than Jessop's regretful unease about Reynold's situation in "A Tale Told by Moonlight", but no more ambivalent. Conrad's rhetorical intricacies are vastly more sophisticated and symptomatic of their sense than Woolf's rather obvious gestures of disruption and attempts at distancing himself, but Woolf's story still conveys much through its essential anxieties. Clearly, both of Woolf's stories are patterned after Conrad's: the framing devices, the eastern settings, the ambivalent imperialism, the degraded Europeans.<sup>42</sup> This fact alone adds to the quotient of Woolf's rhetorical anxiety—he needs a pattern, a precursor, upon which to model his own expressions.

There is further evidence of Woolf's dependence upon Conrad. Somewhere in the period of 1912-1913, immediately following the completion of *The Village in the Jungle* and more or less contemporaneous with the composition of "A Tale told by Moonlight" and "Pearls and Swine", Woolf reread all of Conrad works published at the time in preparation for a lecture he gave on Conrad for an unknown occasion and audience.<sup>43</sup> In the lecture, he speaks of Conrad in a spirit very revealing of his own critical and creative agenda with respect to fiction-making. He opens by stating that the whole project has filled him with "doubts, hesitations, and possibly regrets," (p. 286). He wishes he had the lapidary wisdom of an Eastern sage to pronounce "What is, is,"—he wants to claim total interpretative authority, but is anxious about doing so. In an effort to side-step this temptation he sets about an effort of typology, categorizing Conrad's work as a fortuitous combination of two apparently antithetical impulses, the romantic and the realistic, saying that the "highest art" of the modern novelist consists in the "reconciliation and combination" of "primitive" romance and "civilized" realism. (p. 289) Already his binarisms are becoming awkward, and suggest an Orientalist hermeneutic which Conrad himself disrupts. One can see how this sort of critical thinking, translated into a creative experiment, might well be anxious indeed when combined with Woolf's Liberal views and actual sympathetic experiences in Ceylon. When Woolf then goes on to praise Conrad chiefly in terms of his ability "to find

<sup>42</sup> In fact, in response to "Pearls and Swine", Forster wrote that Woolf should contrast his story with the last section of Conrad's "Karain" [Conrad, ed. Hynes (1992), v. 1, pp. 62-99]. Letter written before 24 Apr 1912, in Forster, ed. by Lago, *Selected Letters* (1983), p. 135i. See also Forster to Woolf, 25 Apr 1912. On narrative in Forster and Conrad, see London (1990). Woolf's stories also bear some resemblance to those of W. Somerset Maugham (1874-1965), although Maugham's eastern stories did not begin to appear until the 1920s. See Maugham (1922), (1934).

<sup>43</sup> Lecture in Stape (1993), pp. 286-302. See also *Essays* (1927)

romance in life itself," (p. 292) he does so by citing Conrad's own "'conviction that the world, the temporal world . . . rests notably, among others, on the idea of fidelity,'" (pp. 290-1).<sup>44</sup> These two statements begin to echo the sentiments of Woolf's narrators from the stories: Jessop with his final appeal to the rhetoric of romance, and the Indian Civil Serviceman with his defensive respect for facts. Woolf extrapolates from Conrad's testimony and from readings of his work: with a notable insensitivity to Conrad's irony, he privileges the imagined re-creation of personal experience in *Youth* over the purely invented world of *Under Western Eyes*, saying that "it is only when [Conrad] is describing things actually seen by him that he seems able to communicate in his writings the emotions felt by him.... His imagination works only among scenes which he has seen and not among scenes which he has invented." (pp. 298, 301) Again, this recalls Jessop and the ICS man wanting their listeners to get the feel of the facts—and exposes Woolf's extreme dependence upon Conrad's model.

Also, as Forster pointed out to Woolf, the "Pearls and Swine" risks becoming preachy—"I still feel a touch of the 'scold' about it."<sup>45</sup> This is another area where Woolf seems to have been at least self-conscious. In the conclusion of his lecture he points out a "rare and good" quality in Conrad: that "he is content to be an artist. He never or practically never preaches," (p. 302)—he never makes those readers of his who have not seen the things he has seen feel inferior. When Forster intimates that his own sensitiveness in this area "just possibly may be . . . an aesthetic conclusion" he is concerned with the whole generic debate on how to make realism artistic. Woolf enters this debate as a fledgling writer fresh from the East and interested in transforming his own experiences into fiction; in his evaluation of Conrad as much as in the tensions in his own stories he exposes the pressure placed upon this transformation by the imperial context itself. Stape says, "his declared partiality for writing derived from experience simultaneously enriches and severely limits his commentary" (p. 281); more interestingly, it also enriches and limits his fiction.

In the simplest terms, this is because his experience is vexed—it has been enriching as well as limiting, gratifying as well as horrifying. We see this in his autobiography:

I certainly, all through my time in Ceylon, enjoyed my position and the flattery of being the great man and the father of the people. That was why, as time went on, I became more and more ambivalent, politically schizophrenic, an anti-imperialist who enjoyed the flesh-pots of imperialism, loved the subject peoples and their way of life, and knew from the inside how evil the system was beneath the surface for ordinary men and women. (*Growing*, pp. 158-9)

<sup>44</sup> Woolf is quoting Conrad's *A Personal Record*, ed. Najder (1988), p. xix.

<sup>45</sup> Forster, ed. by Lago, *Selected Letters*, p. 135i.

In a larger way, Woolf's experience has been so vexed as to preoccupy him above and beyond the contemplation of fictionality *per se*. The connection between these specific experiences and the specific text of his novel is stated outright in the following later passage from the autobiography. Clearly the emphasis is on the immorality of imperialism, his increasing awareness of it, and his interest in conveying that perception in fiction as realistically as possible. There is no stated concern with how to be artistic in the process:

*The Village in the Jungle* was a novel in which I tried somehow or another to live their lives [the Sinhalese jungle villagers]. It was also, in some curious way, the symbol of the anti-imperialism which had been growing upon me more and more in my last years in Ceylon. The Sinhalese way of life, in those entrancing Kandyan hills or the rice fields and coconut plantations of the low country, and above all those strange jungle villages, was what engrossed me in Ceylon; the prospect of the sophisticated, Europeanized life in Colombo, the control of the wheels of the intricate machinery of central administration, with the dreary pomp and circumstance of imperial government, filled me with misgiving and disgust. And I knew that if I went back to Ceylon it was almost certain that I would be returning, not to the village in the jungle, but to the seats of power in Colombo. The more I wrote *The Village in the Jungle*, the more distasteful became the prospect of success in Colombo. (*Beginning Again*, pp. 47-8)

By whatever time the concern to be artistic began to influence Woolf—from his own reading of Conrad, from Forster's editorial comments, from exposure to his wife's and other writers' work—a suspicion seems to have begun taking root that what really concerned him in his own work was the message not the method. Before it became consciously acknowledged, though, and in such venues as the stories, it surfaces in the texts as a sort of double-pronged anxiety: concerned to make a statement and concerned to do so in the most appropriate, resonant way. If that way should *not* be through fiction, then to other genres he would turn—and that is certainly what he did. Thus if there is a generic or organic unity to Woolf's fiction, and a context in which to understand its cessation, it is defined by the double anxiety over imperialism and its expression in prose. In other words, Woolf's critique of imperialism in the stories inheres in its anxious expression, its suspicion of the rhetoric of fiction, and in an intimation that the implicit rhetoric of the novel *The Village in the Jungle* is equally insufficient to communicate all that the author feels can and must be conveyed.



## CONCLUSION

THROUGHOUT HIS LONG and active life Woolf was both an observer of and a contributor to the patterns by which the literary and historical changes involved in the decay of imperialism can be seen very clearly to interpenetrate. Edward Said helps elucidate this point with the idea that modernist literary culture developed as a response to and a reflection of the decay of imperialism as the dominant social/political system:

To deal with this [decay, and the challenge of representing it], a new encyclopedic form became necessary, one that had three distinct features. First was a circularity of structure, inclusive and open at the same time: *Ulysses*, *Heart of Darkness*, *A la recherche*, *The Waste Land*, *Cantos*, *To the Lighthouse*. Second was a novelty based almost entirely on the reformulation of the old, even outdated fragments drawn self-consciously from disparate locations, sources, cultures: the hallmark of modernist form is the strange juxtaposition of comic and tragic, high and low, commonplace and exotic, familiar and alien whose most ingenious resolution is Joyce's fusing of the *Odyssey* with the Wandering Jew, advertising and Virgil (or Dante), perfect symmetry and the salesman's catalogue. Third is the irony of a form that draws attention to itself as substituting art and its creations for the once-possible synthesis of the world empires. When you can no longer assume that Britannia will rule the waves forever, you have to reconceive reality as something that can be held together by you the artist, in history rather than geography. Spatiality becomes, ironically, the characteristic of an aesthetic rather than of political domination, as more and more regions—from India to Africa and the Caribbean—challenge the classical empires and their cultures. (CI, p. 229)

Woolf's work, as a whole, observes this phenomenon, without being an agent of it. His writing, even in *The Village in the Jungle* or the two short stories, never achieves either the irony or the reconception of reality by which Said sees the novel, or the artist in general, as the arbiter of perception in the context of empire. Woolf's inability to perceive the ironic textuality of Conrad's *Under Western Eyes* is significant here. Most often Woolf's fiction is too hesitant, too reluctant to be artistic; its language is too clinically anthropological, its spatiality too thoroughly political. At other times, it is anxiously ambivalent in its manipulation of the rhetorical modes of fiction. The interpenetration which could occur is as yet unachieved, although perhaps all the ingredients for it are arrayed. The task requires more visionary qualities than Woolf possessed. All the same, it is crucial to examine what these ingredients are through the eyes of someone so aware of his own strengths and weaknesses, and so involved with the success and failures of other writers and historically influential individuals of this crucial time in imperial and literary history. In this way Woolf is a catalyst for many of Said's later, subtler perceptions.



Thus the most significant reason why Woolf contributes to the argument of this thesis is that he is conscious of the challenge of apprehending the moral crisis of empire in writing in a way which seems to forecast in general the critical innovations of postcolonialism, (here represented only by Said, but I hope with sufficient resonance). Throughout his work Woolf is specifically interested in the way a critical *and* creative mind perceives the world in any particular moment in history, feels an empathic response of some sort, and expresses this in literature. Whether that literature takes the form of fiction or some other genre is often of crucial interest, and whether that literature has any actual power to change or to stir in others a similar empathy is of ultimate interest. All of this is played out against the backdrop of the relationship between a developing modernism as it tends toward postmodernism. We turn now to the example of E. J. Thompson to concentrate on whether these rhetorical anxieties and inadequacies can in turn relate to postcolonialism—in other words, how they can be specifically characterized as precursive to whatever it is that succeeds them.

## CHAPTER THREE

# E. J. THOMPSON

---

### INTRODUCTORY

E. J. THOMPSON'S work is conspicuously anxious—mainly in the sense meaning nervous or governed by anxieties, but also in the sense of expectant or anticipatory. The first sense has to do with his attempt to accommodate the experience of imperialism, personal experience as well as general social experience, into writing of various forms. The other sense anticipates a harmony of cultures and nations, insupportable in the contemporary order but nonetheless strongly desired as a means of bringing out the best in the peoples involved through mutual interaction. In each sense anxiety is both state of mind and mode of expression, both behind the text and within it—anxiety actually takes the form of rhetoric. This is clear in the way Thompson constantly asks certain questions throughout his restless, varied, and large body of work: how might an English writer communicate what imperialism really means to imperialist and subject peoples alike with equal resonance? What form should this communication take? What might it signify for the future of the idea of imperialism? Is such communication actually possible? Here we shall be concerned not so much with his answers to these questions as with his manner of asking—especially in a slim polemical book, *The Other Side of the Medal*, which concerns the 1857 Sepoy rebellion or “Mutiny”, and in several imaginative works set in India. The basic argument is that Thompson's concerns over the morality and representation of imperialism are expressed, as with Woolf, through manipulations of genre and form. More than Woolf, Thompson makes his anxiety explicit, and makes his search for a voice with which to combat it a central theme of his work. He employs a rhetoric of anxiety itself more communicative than the specific ideas expressed in his books, and the essence of what is communicated through this anxiety is significantly resonant with respect to postcolonialism. In short, Thompson is less interesting for what he says than for how he says it—and as such, is valuable for understanding the development of the notion of the precursor specifically in terms of anxiety and rhetoric.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> For biographical information on Thompson, see Theodosia Thompson to H.N. Margoliouth, undated (1950s); *Dictionary of National Biography*; Parry (1972), pp 164-202; E.P. Thompson (1993). Professor Mary Lago is working on a biography, and Dr. Harish Trivedi is completing a full-length study.

How do Thompson's anxieties prefigure a later postcolonial confidence? Certainly one way to approach this question is to establish more firmly how Thompson, with Woolf and Forster and others, relates to modernism as it develops toward postmodernism, and how that situation relates to postcolonialism. And yet, Thompson's case suggests that a slightly different strategy may be more useful, one which involves a different set of relationships. In his work there are few opportunities for exploring the relationships between modernism and postcolonialism, and only some access to questions of how the rhetoric of sentimental realism functions in an imperial context. How then can Thompson's rhetoric give evidence of his anxiety over imperialism, and in polyphonic relationship to that, also function as a strategy for dealing with both anxiety and imperialism?

In Thompson's work there is a large obsession with relationships between individuals and cultures as defined by several particular tropes: fairness, atonement, and especially voice. Thompson's work in general can be characterized through these three ideas: his oeuvre is an effort at finding the right voice for representing the entire Indian imperial experience fairly and to atone for abuses within and of its history. This obsession with voice particularly seems to be the best way to focus the basic texture of anxiety throughout the oeuvre insofar as it involves a consciousness of itself as a mode of expression: as it were, a rhetorical state of mind. In this we see the interdependence of anxiety and rhetoric, as well as the value of exploring them polyphonically. Also, voice provides for Thompson's work to be the connection between that of Woolf's loss of voice and Forster's gestural rhetoric; these writers can thus be regarded not as Bloomsbury figures but as English Indian writers along a rhetorical trajectory developing toward postcolonialism: toward a generation of writers who can move beyond anxiety and who feel they have found a voice.

Does this mean, however, that Thompson's rhetoric of anxiety is a *precursor* to postcolonialism? The logical difficulty we exposed in the Introduction returns here: can one have precursors to successors? In Woolf's case, anxieties over the rhetoric of realism to represent empire implied that an alternative rhetoric, coming after the ineluctably colonial one confining him, must logically be postcolonial. But is that sound? Thompson's case, which is similar, both clarifies and complicates this formulation: anxiety over the adequacy of colonial rhetoric to the essential task of atoning for its own abuses—including the misrepresentation of history—constantly returns Thompson to images and tropes of utter irreconcilability. The implication is that there is no way a colonial rhetoric can develop into a postcolonial one; rather, it must be

supplanted by a voice which is presently unheard and impossible to represent in the existing rhetoric of English India. Furthermore, British representations of India, which are apparently so wrong, can never be replaced by those Indian representations of India that, as long as the memory endures of unatoned English colonial abuses, are likely to be just as wrong in different ways. Something must break the cycle before a postcolonial voice can be heard. Thompson wants to be that catalyst, and in this sense to be a precursor to whatever follows him. But his anxiety is that he must write himself, as a colonial, to the point of silence before another voice can be heard; his very act of working for a postcolonial situation denies him any place in it. The purely logical dimension of the question persists: can this relationship of anxious colonial rhetoric to successive postcolonial rhetoric be called *precursive*? Can one have precursors to successors, with no causal relationship between them? In many ways this logical cleft is symptomatic of the entire English discourse of India, and attention to this problem, especially through a reading of *The Other Side of the Medal*, is crucial to the stability of this thesis as a whole.

In his vexed relationship to rhetorics he regards as inadequate to the context of imperialism, Thompson indicates that he knows not nor can conceive an alternative rhetoric with which to proceed. In consequence, there are anxious attempts to formulate some sort of voice, great frustrations of genre and form, and at times a general despair over not having an effective means of communicating. These tropes of anxiety, frustration, and voice are the most distinctive rhetorical characteristics of Thompson's oeuvre—and are notable for bringing ideas of a distinctly different order polyphonically together: states of mind and modes of expression. Also, if this rhetoric is conspicuous for failing to reach its desired but unimaginable goal, it nonetheless contributes quite thoroughly to the polyphonic process of discrediting its dominative origins. In this Thompson has helped prepare the way for postcolonialism by contributing to the reversal of intellectual, social, and political patterns by which colonialism is rarely questioned openly and systematically—by intimating that there can be such a thing as that which comes after colonialism, and by intertwining this idea into his distinctly nonrevolutionary approach to empire.<sup>2</sup> If postcolonialism *per se* has little

<sup>2</sup> See correspondence: Jawaharlal Nehru to Thompson, 10 Apr 1941: "You have influenced a considerable number of people in India and England not obviously so much as in a larger deeper way." Nehru to E.P. Thompson, 10 Apr 1946: "[Your father] has influenced many people in India, and many people in England, so he has been a real peace-maker between nations and peoples." See also Nehru (1958, 1989). Contrast K.N. Haksar to Thompson, 19 Jun 1932 and 30 Nov 1934: "Your purpose is not merely to promote a better understanding but to create conditions that would give a new and

or no genetic relationship to his work, it is notionally similar to his attempts to write in a new, hybrid way about colonialism. And if his mistakes and misconceptions, his ambiguous and anxious rhetoric, at times even seem to retard or distract from the development of workable postcolonial positions, in no way does that detract from his status as a precursor: in essence, the inadequacies of his work almost necessitate the development of postcolonialism—he cannot express his vision, but it is clear he has one; he is explicitly anxious over his lack of voice, but it is clear others might not lack one. He presents and represents a situation in which something must follow him and take up the work he cannot do, but which he so incontrovertibly presents as needing to be done.

Thus, Thompson is useful for focusing some of the logical difficulties we have seen emerging in the Introduction and in the chapter on Woolf, especially the whole question of how one can have precursors to successors and whether postcolonialism can be approached, if not defined, through such an ambiguous set of relationships. Attention to Thompson provides access to analogous ambiguities, explores methods for dealing with them, and demonstrates how the anxieties they provoke can constitute an identifiable rhetoric. These aspects of Thompson's oeuvre attempt to express both frustration *and* resolution; they are suggested by the reading of Woolf, conceived through Said's notion of polyphony, and lead to Forster and the question of how this rhetoric of anxiety specifically contributes to the genealogy of postcolonialism. Here the concern is to show that the atmosphere of anxiety—of observation and sensitivity coupled with an insufficient apparatus of expression—constitutes a stimulus to the development of a radically different apparatus; and to show the rhetorical evidence for this in tropes of fairness, atonement, and voice.

---

prolonged lease of life to the empire." Also Gandhi to Thompson, 28 Sep 1939; W.Rushbrooke to Thompson, 27 Nov 1943.



### *THE OTHER SIDE OF THE MEDAL*

*THE OTHER SIDE OF THE MEDAL* now begins with a "Preface to the American Edition," of 1926, followed by a shorter preface to the original edition of 1925.<sup>3</sup> These make the case—differently—that it is the task of the British to set the record straight on the horrors of 1857; that the British have written an inaccurate history of those events and of empire in general; and that Indians deeply resent this, perhaps more than they resented the oppression which caused unrest in the first place or the ghastly reprisals exacted by the British in punishment.<sup>4</sup> Thompson says this is "*not* 'a book about the Mutiny'," but rather an exploration into the residue of bitterness left by the events of 1857, and perpetuated by the literature on the subject—this last point being the principal one. He does not want to add to the existing Mutiny literature, but to comment upon it and its various attitudes.<sup>5</sup> What is interesting about this text, which is an exercise in fairness and atonement, then, is its central rhetorical evasion of its own discourse—and its attempt to encourage an alternative, but as yet unknown, voice. This would seem to be an impossible, or at least illogical task. The rhetorical position exposes this central anxiety and obstreperous question: how can any English colonial rhetoric even represent the need for an alternative rhetoric with which to represent India, without in one way or another hampering the development of that new rhetoric at the same time?<sup>6</sup>

Thompson begins his approach to this challenge by creating a rhetoric of intense and unsuppressable anxiety right from the start: "I hope that some Indian readers—and I am aware that I cannot help having Indian readers—will feel less despairing of a change of attitude in Englishmen when they realize how much our minds have been abused by untruthful history; and will feel that an outlet has been found for an unexpressed bitterness that was corroding their own thought" (OM, p. 4).<sup>7</sup> Thompson feels that Indians will not be so annoyed at the British having mis-written Indian history if some attempt is made to write it properly; but at the same time he does not really want

<sup>3</sup> (London: 1925; New York, 1926; Westport, CT: 1974).

<sup>4</sup> See correspondence with Forster, Lyon, Mahalanobis, Ratcliffe, Rushbrooke, Tagore, E.W. Thompson, Woolf—especially in 1924-25. On the comparable horror of the 1919 Amritsar Massacre, see *Letter from India* (1932), ch. 11, and *You Have Lived Through All This* (1932), pp. 85-7; Parry (1972), pp. 174-5; Sayer (1991).

<sup>5</sup> See Thompson's many reviews of "Mutiny" literature: Misc. MSS—"Reviews By Thompson."

<sup>6</sup> Compare E.P. Thompson (1993), especially pp. 10, 103-4, who approaches similar questions through the correspondence with and books on Tagore (1924, 1926, 1928, 1948); see also correspondence with Rothenstein, especially 16 Mar 1927; and Lago (1974).

<sup>7</sup> Compare reviews of OM in *The Times of India* and *The Hindu*.

Indians to see this happening: he "cannot help having Indian readers," or as he says later, "Had it been possible, I would have kept [the book's] circulation within the strict limits of Great Britain" (OM, p. 6). Perhaps this is meant to be modesty, some sort of Christian-motivated urge to keep the left hand ignorant of the doings of the right—but it reads very anxiously, and generates a confusion of intent. It seems that Thompson wants to tell the whole truth about the Indian empire, but not in India. His oblique approach has the effect of creating a new form of proscriptiveness. "Truth has an eternal title to our confession, even though we are the sufferers by it"—Thompson quotes this in his original preface, and yet in his anxiety not to suffer himself, his truth telling suffers instead, decaying into a rhetoric of anxiety.

Even the fashion in which Thompson presents the notion of mis-written history, at the same time as it argues for an increased level of fairness, especially with respect to some of the good things the British have done in India, manages to allude to some of the most unfair and barbarous activities of the both the British and the Indians, and to do so in an anxiously veiled fashion:

History is being generously rewritten to-day, to our great gain, and the world is beginning to see that the English are not only or always hypocrites or fiends. That we have endured so much gain-saying of men with, on the whole, so much dignity and quietness is now being reckoned to us for righteousness. But are there no other travesties of events in history-books? Now that American historians are so generously dispelling the clouds of old detraction of us, cannot we show the same magnanimity toward India? If we do, I am convinced that we shall get very close to one main fountain that is now sending forth a steady flow of poisoned waters, and we can cleanse its well of bitterness. (OM, p. 29)

The "well of bitterness" could be delicately suggesting, without naming, the well at Cawnpore into which the hacked bodies of hundreds of British women and children were thrown at one phase of the unrest in 1857, and which is often considered to have provoked the fiercest British reprisals (even though it occurred after some of them).<sup>8</sup> This passage is full of cautious statements and allusions, but in its efforts to be "fair" it seems to open up old wounds.

The text greatly emphasizes "Indian Irreconcilability"—a sense of impasse, of the impossibility of communication, of the utter inadequacy of English to perceive, represent, or atone for its own abuses:

Many Englishmen in India must have had my experience. They have been puzzling over the problem, honestly anxious to find out where the actual point of exasperation—no, more than exasperation, of severance—came, and to see if anything

<sup>8</sup> See also Brantlinger (1988), ch. 7, "The Well at Cawnpore: Literary Representations of the Indian Mutiny, 1857," pp. 199-226. There are also echoes of Cawnpore in "Atonement" (AT, p. 114), where British forces rest on the "coping of a well" after suppressing a violent mob.

could be done. Then they have thought that they had found it—yes, it was here, see! They have pushed hard, only to find that they have gone through a curtain painted like a wall, to find a real wall, granite and immovable, behind. (OM, p. 27)<sup>9</sup>

This strong metaphor of frustration, however descriptive it may be, is also ironically illustrative of the inescapable and disabling persistence of the Orientalist paradigm of the unknowable Other. Thompson's actual attempt to know that Other throws up the obstacle of yet another image of impenetrability. But what is crucial is that he is aware of this problem—of his logical/rhetorical trap—and his strategy for dealing with it involves an emphasis on the frustration itself. Since all other subjects generate anxiety and shut down discourse, he short-circuits the whole painful process and makes anxiety itself the subject of his discourse. The point, on the one hand, is to blast through to some species of atonement by refusing to perpetuate the system which has for so long prevented it; and on the other, to claim a new rhetoric, a rhetoric of anxiety, which posits the inadequacy of any other rhetoric and the dire need for something else beyond itself. The trick is to achieve this without slipping back into a colonial rhetoric of some sort or another. This is an anxious position; but as long as one's self-definition is based on anxiety, then any rhetorical slippage can be attributed not to the ignorance or immorality or colonialism, but rather to the inadequacy of colonialism to the task of speaking outside itself. Thus the logical difficulty we exposed above becomes a positive force: another instance of the discourse of difficulty—Burke, Woolf—being embraced as productive. The logical difficulty itself serves to translate a rhetoric of abuse through a rhetoric of anxiety toward a rhetoric of reform: colonialism moving through a precursor toward postcolonialism.

In this atmosphere of mingled suspicion and compulsion, of anxiety and anticipation, and of logical ambiguity, the four chapters of *The Other Side of the Medal* proceed as follows: I) Indian Irreconcilability, II) The Mutiny, III) Shadows of the Mutiny, and IV) Conclusion. "Indian Irreconcilability" tries to justify the project of the book by saying that the British for too long have ignored issues of grave importance to India and Britain alike. One of Thompson's favorite little epigrams—he uses it before several books, and it provides the first sentence for this one—is what he describes as an 'Oxford saying, 1925': "The merest mention of the word India is guaranteed to empty the smallest lecture hall in the city." In the same vein, he comments: "Indian thought, which a famous professor once upon a time almost induced our people to think a sun, is now seen to be a moon, pallid and shut in with watery mysticism. Indian literature is a

<sup>9</sup> See also "Atonement" (1924), p. 61; and letter to Doit Garratt, 14 Dec 1945.

gently pleasing patter about cows and lotuses" (OM, p. 12). British lack of interest in India, even at parliamentary level has reached the point that MPs in 1925 do not know who Gandhi is (OM, p. 13) and judges openly mock Indian doctrines in courts (OM, p. 14).

But the chapter does not consist only of that; its other half is concerned to show how accurate some of these prejudices can be, and that Indians are much to blame for many things. Irreconcilability is presented as a fault of both sides. Where the larger blame for imperialism lies is a different question, but the immediate culpability for certain acts and situations can lie at the feet of all races in India. Consider such double-pronged barbs as this: "It would be difficult to libel the miserable being whom our Western system of education, manipulated by incompetent and often grossly dishonest Indians, has evolved" (OM, p. 22). The implication is that though the larger evil is imperialism—"the whole world is raw and bleeding" (OM, p. 23)—the lesser evils of the people caught in that system are still inexcusable.<sup>10</sup>

Thompson is trying at one time to salve the pain of living under the lesser evils and to get at the root of the larger trouble. The challenge is that attention to the littler problems is often distracting, time consuming, productive of much bitterness, destructive of honest communication. There is a paramount need to move beyond the issue of blame: "May we not ask, Need there be a struggle?... Or if there must be a struggle, need it be embittered?" (OM, p. 22). Rather than waste time with specifics, because they make for irreconcilability—"Many of these things are not our fault, even though the extremist press would make everything our fault" (OM, p. 24)—rather than constantly rehearsing through the fault and the blame, would it not be more productive to inquire into the causes of such a system of constant offense by way of eliminating them and thereby eliminating the system—"to understand what is at the root of the trouble" (OM, p. 22)?

Chapters II and III, "The Mutiny" and "Shadows of the Mutiny," then continue in an intriguingly indirect fashion—not talking about the Mutiny by talking about the Mutiny. They present a bewildering array of quotations from other books which are explicitly about the Mutiny. Rather than explaining what happened, Thompson shows other people's attempts to do so, shows bad ones and good ones, lets them all speak together, and hopes that the "truth" will sift itself to the top. In this way he can avoid expressing his own opinions and claiming them as truth—by not writing a new history

<sup>10</sup> Compare correspondence with Gandhi, Haksar, Iqbal, Mahalanobis, Nehru, Ratcliffe, Rothenstein.



himself, he can avoid falling under the same accusations which he is leveling against all other histories, that being English they must fall insidiously short of the truth.<sup>11</sup>

*The Other Side of the Medal* constantly quotes other texts. This is a means of expressing its consciousness of its own inadequacy, and of trying to avoid a usurpation of the Indian voice. Here, emphatically, is the most conspicuous trope of voice put into the service of evoking an unattainable alternate rhetoric—at least in theory, although we will see it fall short of its potential). It is an anakreusis meant to clear the air of lingering daemons and allow the worthy voices to begin. It is symptomatic of the need to distill out of the bewildering cacophony of the historiography of India discrete vocal lines with which to organize a productive polyphony. And most conspicuously (and consistent with the discourse of a productive illogicality) it sets up the context of voice as a strategy for avoiding speech: rather than make definitive, unfairly authoritative statements or analyses himself, Thompson creates a polyvocal text which consciously regards and presents an alternate form of historiography, and which makes the case that colonialism requires alternative historiographies to move toward postcolonialism. The text sets out to break one kind of authority, and at the same time proceeds according to a methodology of anxiety over its own authority, even its own authorship. The colonial is drained away through the operation of the anxious polyvocal rhetoric itself, and clears space for a postcolonial rhetoric in its stead.

How does this function? Romeshchandra Dutt's description of the events of 1857 in *India in the Victorian Age* is presented as the first in a series of viewpoints. The quotations are merely prefaced and separated by, "Romesh Dutt says...", "The Oxford History of India says...", "An Indian who was in Delhi says..."—very little comment is provided, as if the juxtaposition of the sources were expected to let the truth speak for itself, without the intervention of an authorial will. All of this works fairly efficiently as part of the mechanism by which an actual trope of voice is substituted for the inadequacies in any specific written rhetoric. More subtly, the juxtapositions Thompson chooses to make are often quite pointed: in one instance he first shows Sir John William Kaye's *History of the Sepoy War* being reticent about the details of certain hideous British punishments: "And what these brave men, being eye-witnesses of the horror, shrunk from describing, I may well abstain from dwelling on in detail. There is no lack, however, of particulars, all ghastly and some grotesque, in the

<sup>11</sup> Contrast letter from John Buchan, 14 May 1935: "I am afraid you do not lay yourself out to conciliate the academic historian by your habit of constantly quoting not very authoritative modern works...."



contemporary letters before me," (OM, p. 43). Next Thompson quotes "a lady, a clergyman's widow," presumably a source he considers more likely to be diffident but here excited to a gory dispassion. This citation forms the end of a section and is not glossed in any way:

Many prisoners were hanged after the battle, and as it was discovered that they did not care for hanging, four were tried and sentenced to be blown from guns; accordingly one day we were startled by hearing a gun go off, with an indescribably horrid muffled sound.... An officer told us it was a most sickening sight.... One gun was over charged, and the poor wretch was literally blown into atoms, the lookers-on being covered with blood and fragments of flesh: the head of one poor wretch fell on a bystander and hurt him. (OM, p. 43)

Thompson presents this as an example of how the circumstances of the Mutiny were so extreme as to crush all thoughts of reticence: "Before the Mutiny had run many weeks of its course our people had so supped full of this particular horror that they had ceased to be squeamish in describing it," (OM, p. 43). Here we see Thompson trying to construct a situation in which it would be better to fall actually silent than perpetuate the horrors through such cold retellings.

What is most interesting, though, is that Thompson does not stick to this device for long. His urge to comment does in fact overwhelm him quite often; one can see this even within the series cited above, in which there are odd swipes like these: "the pseudonymous author of *The Lost Dominion*—that pretentious and noxious book" (OM, 32); Vincent Smith's "cold" *Oxford History of India* (OM, p. 30); Sir George W. Forrest's *History of the Indian Mutiny*, "a very large book" (OM, Appendix, p. 134) of which Thompson says, "One might throw the lists open to the literature of the whole world, and still not find a more superb example of smug effrontery," (OM, p. 84). Thompson simply cannot immolate his own voice to the larger ideal of letting the others speak—he has taken upon himself the task of discrediting these British writers, on the grounds that he will have greater resonance as a critic than an Indian writer; but this itself robs Indians of the chance to defend themselves or justify their own position and perspective. Once Thompson begins to comment, he usurps the Indian voice he is trying to encourage, and seems to subvert his own project.

It is useful to note that when Thompson turned to writing history, this problem of usurpation and misrepresentation did indeed beset him—and he was at various times more or less aware of it. It is interesting that in *The Other Side of the Medal*, something of a prologue to his historical work, he offered perhaps the most suggestive approach to the issue, by thematizing it specifically. But the example of his own later work

demonstrates this inescapable inadequacy to the task of representing India "fairly," as well as its own anxious awareness of that inadequacy.

His 1927 pamphlet "A History of India" questions how Indians could ever become so discontented or Englishmen so vicious, but does so very ambiguously: "The effect of these years of warring against savagery [1829-1857] . . . seems never to have been noticed.... [They] bred an inevitable high-handedness, and scorn for the people whose ethics included such cruelties, and all this ultimately exploded in the self-righteousness that, at the time and afterwards, could see nothing in the Mutiny outbreak but villainy. Yet the British conviction of superiority was, perhaps, inevitable," (HI, p. 65). This last sentence is ambiguous in ways similar to some of the material from the Prefaces to *The Other Side of the Medal*. The need to explain, without seeming to justify, hideous events, the cautious "perhaps"—these are as much all aspects of Thompson's anxiety as they are of his sense of fairness. The same ambiguities continue:

In November 1858 the Crown took over the Government of India. This was an excellent thing, but one could wish that it had been brought about by less awful events. The Mutiny persuaded the people of Britain to cancel an outworn system; but it also postponed by decades the admission of the people to a share in their own rule. India became what it was not before—a conquered country. The day is almost here when to us, looking back, it will be seen a thing nigh incredible that we governed it so long without dreaming that its people wished, or were entitled, to be consulted in the matter of their own rule.

Much of the prejudice taken over from 1857 by the victors is traceable to the very word "mutiny." But the mutiny was one of men who wished to drive out alien rule, and had seen the sphere in which they could rise to influence and power steadily and rapidly lessened. (HI, p. 69)

The Raj is "an excellent thing" and yet India is a "conquered country"; the "day is almost here" but significantly not yet arrived, when self-determination for India will be inevitable; the word 'mutiny' is productive of prejudice, and yet he uses it throughout.

Such ambiguities continued to govern Thompson through the later phases of his work, as in this example this from *The Making of the Indian Princes* (1943): "Our writing of Indian history is perhaps resented more than anything else we have done" (p. vi)—a statement which nonetheless precedes yet another example of "our writing of Indian history." Even when the writing is done with grace and sensitivity, as in the period up to about 1830 by such men of literature and action—Munro, Malcolm, Metcalfe, and Elphinstone—"who habitually wrote on this level or higher," (p. viii), historiography is a form of domination as surely as any other. Thompson makes much of how the men of 1800-1830 may have been paternalistic but were also more humane and heroic and honest about being conquerors—but this seems an unsatisfactory

justification for empire, and one which jars with the earlier idea from the "History of India" pamphlet that the peoples of India might have been "entitled to be consulted in the matter of their own rule," (HI, p. 69). Thompson also tries to justify his support for early nineteenth century historiography and his own alignment with it by saying that at least it was more fair than the work done since 1857, thus: "it will make for an understanding on our part, and for healing forgetfulness on the part of Indians, if both races can look on the earlier picture more" (*Princes*, p. 37).<sup>12</sup> But the problem with this "earlier picture" is that it was, after all, a period of great colonial expansion by the British in India—and that its discourse is emphatically colonial. Benita Parry notes that "some of [Thompson's] postures suggest the paradox of moral conscience joined with ineradicable paternalistic suppositions.... He offered himself as the spokesman of Indian protest, imposing on Indians the forms of suffering and redemption which he thought appropriate, and here he gave expression to paternalist predilections shared by those who were in the governing trade."<sup>13</sup> The question is whether Thompson was aware of these "predilections"—and to what extent he accommodated this awareness into his historiographical writing.

It does seem that his awareness was weaker in the later works, but equally clear that Thompson knew himself, at times, to be caught in this trap—and *The Other Side of the Medal* is a strong instance of that. In other places as well he struggled with an awareness of and annoyance at the suspicion of himself perpetuating a degree of misrepresentation. He could express his opinions, even offer his advice, about how not to write history; but he was continually frustrated by the attempt to supply an alternative rhetoric. The point, therefore, is not so much that he fell into imperialist rhetorical traps at times, or that he should be discredited for this, but that there is evidence that he was aware—to greater and lesser degrees—of doing so, and strove at times to resist the tendency. Furthermore, this evidence is not so much some explicit statement of frustration, but the frustrations of form so conspicuous in his writing—the rhetoric of anxiety. The following is a rather awkward passage from *Night Falls on Siva's Hills* (1929)—significantly, a novel—which both attempts and is reluctant to claim historiographical space in India:

The victory of 1858 had been too complete and terrible, and had left the participants too dazed or too insolently triumphant for any natural way of partnership to emerge for another half-century to come. But among the conquerors in that savage struggle

<sup>12</sup> See his own *Rise and Fulfillment of British Power in India* (1934), and *The Life of Charles, Lord Metcalfe* (1937); also his reports to the Rhodes Trustees (1932), (1939): Misc MSS.

<sup>13</sup> (1972), pp. 167, 202.

the ruling class produced individuals to whom the memory of agony witnessed was remorse as well as glory, who were resolved—while their own people entered on that course of complacency that is only now finishing—to prevent exploitation of the conquered. But this is not a fair summary of the cause of these clashes between official and unofficial Briton. Rectitude, and, especially, magnificent consciousness of rectitude are not endearing qualities, except to their possessor; the unofficial Englishman, who has written few memoirs and whom the historic Muse knows chiefly as the culprit snubbed or actively set right in the Minutes and policies of an Administration whose power was unchallenged through so long a period, had a case. He can be shown to have been in the wrong almost consistently; but how offensive the reformer of the world, the person both wealthy and aggressively good, can be, the Anglo-Saxon and his American cousins have by now convinced everyone but themselves. (NF, p. 2-3)<sup>14</sup>

It is difficult to discern what Thompson is trying to say here: the “individual to whom the memory of agony witnessed was remorse as well as glory,” is someone like himself, presumably; so too is the “unofficial Englishman,” whose revisionary histories of the period have been “snubbed or actively set right” by the power of the unchallenged Raj. And yet, this person, himself, “can be shown to have been in the wrong, almost consistently,” and furthermore to have been hampered by an unselfconscious rhetoric of rectitude. Thompson figures his own perspective as “wrong” and “offensive.” Why? Because no matter how “fair” such writing may be, it still obscures the real issue, which is that Indians are not being given a voice. Indian territory has been usurped, in historiography as much as in geography:

In the present writer's opinion, three things estrange educated Indians from us. These are, their feeling that we force upon them an interpretation and writing of their history which is unjust and—in the very assumption that we have the right to dictate the interpretation of their own history to them—insulting; their conviction that any deed, however violent, will be condoned if it is done by an Englishman in a high and responsible position; their resentment of what they think is our contempt for their intellect and its achievements. (HI, p. 75)

This may seem to be an example of Thompson actually stating his case directly, seemingly without any ambiguities or anxieties. But it is immediately followed by a contortion which approaches the Orientalist idea that India simply cannot at present write its own history: “India needs an infinitely more rigorous and free criticism of her own thought, literature, and religion” (HI, p. 76).<sup>15</sup> Until some change from within can motivate a general social habit of self-criticism and reform, apparently it must be expected others from outside will comment and judge—including Thompson himself.

<sup>14</sup> Compare Swannick (June 1927)

<sup>15</sup> See also *Suttee* (1928), pp. 142: “[Indians] will be wise if they . . . forget they are a dependent people exposed to a galling criticism from outside. The criticism that matters is their own.”



Thus even as he tries to represent the inappropriateness of his own presence in the debate, he cannot help claiming territory within it. But the rhetoric of anxiety which this generates indicates that, at some level, Thompson is aware of perpetuating the problem he is trying to solve. Another instance of this same sort of collapse in self-awareness comes in a comment which takes on a particular irony in relation to the larger idea here. The following words from Thompson's *History of India* are conspicuously self-referential: "There is something in the word 'India' that disarms the brain; the reader can take up almost any reputable history of India he likes, and he will find quoted with heavy, emphatic approval statements that he himself—if he will only substitute the name of some country, any country, for India—can see are fatuous and question begging" (HI, p. 75). Thompson's inability to escape a colonial rhetoric is here emphatically announced as both character and theme of his own rhetoric. Benita Parry says that "at the heart of Thompson's litany of penance is the impulse to usurp the Indians' will to action and to colonize their capacity for feeling," (*Delusions*, p. 179); but it is possible to see this impulse as something Thompson fights against consistently, because of the very vexations of form and style so prominent in his writing—because of his rhetoric of anxiety.<sup>16</sup>

These silences, juxtapositions, evasions, and ironies are attempts at communication without prejudice. They are, in essence, anticipatory of a rhetoric untrammelled by the inhibitions and preconditions of colonialism—and as such, they are precursive to postcolonialism. Even if by this indirect route he trespasses too far into Orientalist paradigms or at other times strident radicalism, and thereby loses his readers—Indian and British alike—then at least, Thompson hopes, the public understanding will not regress any as a result of his efforts. He feels compelled to take the risk, though others be loud in their denunciation of his decisions.<sup>17</sup> The whole project of "raking up foul mud that should be allowed to settle" is something which Thompson is definitely doing with a purpose. He feels "the raking up is necessary," and says, "I doubt if anything I have said can be called exceptional" (OM, p. 85). For that reason, the statements must be made. Comment ought to be unnecessary, and yet, "the deeds cannot be passed over in silence, for their memory has been burnt into a people's mind" (OM, p. 86).

<sup>16</sup> See E.P. Thompson (1993), p. 104; also Symonds (1986), pp. 101-22.

<sup>17</sup> See T. Rice Holmes, *The Saturday Review*, 30 Apr—18 Jun 1927; P.C. Lyon and Evan Cotton, *Nation & Athenaeum*, 24 Mar—7 Apr 1928: "The writing of such books as 'The Other Side of the Medal' . . . at the present moment . . . cannot promote the removal of persistent misunderstanding of English motives or assist in the growth of good feeling."



The ways in which Thompson tries, and sometimes fails to invoke this awareness indirectly, and the ways in which this foreshadows a rhetoric of postcolonialism, have been the point of this reading of *The Other Side of the Medal*. Near the end of his text, Thompson makes a turn which is generally descriptive of his odd rhetorical ambivalences. In a sentence which seems almost to reverse the whole point of the text, he says, "I am not going to say much about the influence of the Mutiny and its memories on the Indian mind. Any reader with imagination can guess" (OM, p. 119). In a way, that reversal encapsulates the whole point of the book: Thompson attempts to suggest the influences of the Mutiny and then, drawing himself back, to urge us to "imagine" their significance—in other words, to encourage a creative rather than a reactive response. This is a call for a new voice at its most basic, and most crucial. Thompson continues, "It is maintained by some of the few Englishmen who know the truth of what happened in 1857, that all that is necessary is to wait a few years more, till the memories have died in the minds that store them. But that is not the case. So long as the story is told by our books as it is now, the resentment will spread and grow," (OM, p. 121). Changing how the story is told, and yet retaining its telling—this is the fairness, the atonement which Thompson is so anxiously trying to achieve; and at the same time it is the new voice which he finds so frustratingly beyond his own reach.

## RHETORIC OF VOICE IN ACTION

UP TO NOW I have dealt with the *idea* of voice, and not with its actual operation. Exploring some further examples of the rhetoric of voice in action, and some of the uses of the word "voice", will allow access to Thompson's other works—and make the important transition to a discussion of his fiction.

It is worth noting certain circumstantial operations of voice in Thompson's oeuvre from approximately the same period as *The Other Side of the Medal*—the mid-1920s. For example, his official profession was that of "Lecturer"—on dust jackets and in reviews he is often described as such, instead of as a "writer." At the time he was doing broadcasts for the BBC—a form obviously vocal in essence.<sup>18</sup> Letters from December 1924 indicate that he had been commissioned to edit a series of textbooks of the history of English literature for which he proposed some editions of Icelandic and Norse sagas and of Border ballads—oral, and hence essentially vocal, literature.<sup>19</sup> Also in 1924 he wrote and published *Cithaeron Dialogues*, which is composed on the Platonic model with two voices in dialogue with each other. In his work as a missionary teacher in India he composed many sermons and lectures, and in 1924 published the texts of his lectures on English verse.<sup>20</sup> A typed MS described in the catalog of the Thompson Papers as "a piece of literary criticism"—probably originally a lecture from the 1920s—gives evidence that Thompson's major concerns as a lecturer were prosody, rhythm, accent, and stress in an essentially vocal form: recited poetry. On the first chorus of *Samson Agonistes* he says:

If you see that Chorus printed on a page, it will seem just a bad piece of 'free verse', crude and capricious, lines of all lengths flung in together. But, if you put your mind within Milton's, if you keep your gaze fixed on his thought, you will see that, for conscious control and intimate oversight of expression, the mental impulse and concept pouring *exactly* into each line, with not a syllable over or short, this is perhaps the most masterly passage in English.<sup>21</sup>

Here the context of sound and aspects of vocal stress are used to stress Milton's "intimacy" with his subject and excellence as a writer. This lecture, itself a vocal form, emphasizes the vocal aspect of writing and evaluates literature according to it.

<sup>18</sup> See Elizabeth Thompson and Collingwood to Thompson, 13 & 19 October 1925.

<sup>19</sup> See letters from Collingwood and Canton, 1924.

<sup>20</sup> *Handbook of English Prosody* (1924); see E.P. Thompson (1993), p. 8.

<sup>21</sup> "Misc. Literary Criticism." See also Thompson's review of "Samson Agonistes" in *The London Quarterly Review*, April 1916.

Most of Thompson's work immediately surrounding the 1925 publication of *The Other Side of the Medal*, is drama: "Krishna Kumari" (1924), "Atonement" (1924), "Queen of Ruin" (1927), "The Clouded Mirror" (1927). Thompson wrote these plays for performance—as ideas to be voiced, not merely written or read. He discussed this idea of dramatic composition in letters to friends, as is implied in responses from W. G. Collingwood, 28 May 1924: "A play's a play, and if you want it to score with the papers or the public it must follow the ordinary rules. It is not the Indian subject that does any harm, nor even the notes; though an acting play does not need notes because it is its own explanation."<sup>22</sup> Unfortunately, his plays were almost invariably regarded by friends and critics alike as being untranslatable to the stage, despite working well on the printed page. Reviews of "Atonement" and "Krishna Kumari" particularly recommend the play for reading and not performance; they generally praise the ideas but condemn the choice and handling of the dramatic form for conveying them. In one review of "Atonement" there is even a sense that Thompson is trying to include *too much* voice, which comes flooding out ungoverned: "This is the sort of speech that a novelist would put into the mouth of a character, because a novelist is accustomed to *written* speech, but a dramatist, who is accustomed to *spoken* speech, would not permit any person in his play to disperse the drama in that verbose fashion."<sup>23</sup> Voice is here destructive both of genre and subject matter—and Thompson is regarded as having too much to say and of not knowing how to say it.

In many ways this is the same anxiety Thompson has about himself, and about the English discourse of India. We can see this in the text of "Atonement" particularly, where the English perception of Indian nationalism is presented as simultaneously sympathetic and paranoid, and where English representations of Indian history—and written English generally—are systematically discredited but nonetheless, as in the egregious example of the play itself, perpetuated. But most pointedly, there is no Indian voice offered as an alternative, implying that no English rhetoric can at this point represent an Indian discourse with sufficient respectfulness and resonance. Nationalism is figured as an Indian discourse which is not comprehensible to England, as a voice unheard though increasingly difficult to ignore. Thompson figures into his text the frustration of wanting to give voice to the nationalist perspective while knowing

<sup>22</sup> See also correspondence with Canton, 28 Oct and 5 Nov 1924, and Collingwood's letter, 25 May 1924: "Your picture of the people is very convincing, and I don't see how it can be drawn otherwise than in the form of a play."

<sup>23</sup> Irvine, *The Observer*, 21 Sep 1930.

that any attempt will perpetuate an essentially colonialist discourse. His techniques for this are to give to Englishmen much to say, in which they communicate very little; to have violent Indian nationalists communicating very efficiently to each other offstage, unheard by the British; and in between the two, to place various voices of moderation which pointedly fail to achieve conciliation between the two extremes. All voices are compromised in this environment—the moderate Indian is powerless to explain his own or anyone else's position to the English: "I could break down like a woman when I think of my country and realize that she cannot speak for herself.... Oh, you don't understand. I cannot explain," (AT, p. 64). The sympathetic Englishman is incapacitated by frustration; he cannot say how he came to support the nationalist side (AT, p. 93), nor is his offer accepted to "speak to the people" before violence increases (AT, p. 106). When the nationalists do appear before the audience they have been arrested and are in chains; they speak not of politics but only of personal grievances and memories of the Mutiny era (AT, p. 151-2). The whole issue of irreconcilability and atonement hinges on these vexations of voice. Throughout, there is a sense of a voice which is developing, but which will continue to be unheard by the British until it ceases being specifically polarized against it and in that inevitably implicated in a colonial correspondence. This developing voice will find its own resonance when it is no longer constantly reacting to colonial impositions of one sort or another. The play comes to a resolution which attempts to be neither nationalist nor colonial, and which is specifically portrayed—by a non-violent Gandhi figure, Mahatma Ranade<sup>24</sup>—as a voice not yet in existence, but anticipated. Note that in what Ranade says he both speaks of a voice and supplies in direct discourse the words for that voice to speak, an Indian articulating in English the idea of a postcolonial future: "*This* is atonement—when an Indian—or an Englishman—says: 'I will *not*. Blood is due to me, but I will not exact it. I will pay the price myself.' God is listening for that voice," (AT, p. 156).

A letter to Thompson from Brajendranath Seal on 24 March 1915 suggests something of the origin of this notion, not in a political context but in a specifically rhetorical one. The bulk of the letter concerns a dramatic trilogy by Seal's daughter Sarayubala Das Gupta (which Thompson helped Seal translate from Bengali some years later<sup>25</sup>) described thus: "In each drama of this trilogy, you will find that the dénouement

<sup>24</sup> Trivedi (1993) p. 176: "This must be among the earliest literary representations of Gandhi in any language." See also "Misc. Indian Writings."

<sup>25</sup> See letters between Seal, Das Gupta, and Thompson, 26 Aug 1914 & 24 Mar 1915; and E.P. Thompson (1993), pp. 42 & 63, n. 17.

is brought about by an apparition or a Voice, a manifestation of the transcendental Spirit in the background of the individual Soul; and this is followed at the close by a soliloquy (or epilogue) which reveals the meaning, scheme and purpose of the movement in the soul-drama." Not only is this dramatic use of a personified Voice significant as a possible source for Thompson's interest in the rhetoric of voice, but also as an influence on Thompson's concept of form in "Atonement,"—which is structured in three principal acts and a fourth emphatically labeled "BY WAY OF EPILOGUE ONLY," (AT, p. 167). Thompson's use of a concept of voice according to this inspiration suggests a rhetorical context by which he himself regarded the place of this particular work within the discourse of English India. This was for him an experiment in which he tried to apprehend the "transcendental spirit" behind his "individual" expression—in other words, an attempt to associate his own rhetoric with a general, no longer specifically colonial, discourse of India.

Seal and Thompson first met in a context which emphasized the vocal; and significantly we know the story of this meeting not from a written source but from a broadcast Thompson gave on 26 Jan 1939 in honor of Seal's death. Thompson speaks of how they shared the same cabin on a train: "Presently we began to talk.... I had never heard such talk. When night came, we were each trying to persuade the other to take the comfortable lower berth, and when we reached Bombay were fast friends. I said, 'I am not going to ask your name. There is only one man in India who you can be. You are Brajendranath Seal'."<sup>26</sup> In the broadcast, Thompson continues to characterize Seal by his spoken conversation—which is a distinctive way to depict a literary critic known for his writings. Thompson even de-emphasizes Seal's written language in an effort to call more attention to his voiced conversation: "In latter years, when Seal had become a famous scholar, and all over India was accepted as the greatest living Indian scholar, his style became so stiff and latinised, that some of his most learned publications are very hard to read. But his private talk and private letters were entirely different, their style was that of the most clear and nervous English," (folio 55). Here the context of voice, even at the very tendentious level of "conversation," is connected to issues of the inadequacy of certain written rhetorics—in this case the scholarly.<sup>27</sup> Again, Thompson's sense of what it means to be a writer, and especially a writer concerned with India, has to do with voice.

<sup>26</sup> BBC Empire Transmission, 26 Jan 1939.

<sup>27</sup> Compare the character of Adrian Halstead in Thompson's last (unpublished) novel, *Lily in Jade Vase*, who is known as a drab writer and a brilliant conversationalist (folio 55): "His conversation, dry



Often this involvement is tangential at best, but particularly in the early phases of his work, the mid-1920s, one finds conspicuously many tropes of voice. Anxious as he is about his style and subject matter, we have been arguing, Thompson opts for various vocal rhetorics in order to convey his suspicion of the ability of written English to convey his ideas. After persistent manipulation of voice in many genres he turns in 1927 to the novel. We may look now at some of this fiction—in the spirit of a remark made by a disaffected nationalist in “Atonement”: “History or fiction, why distinguish? Both are the same when an Englishman writes of India,” (AT, p. 140). An examination of Thompson’s fiction will provide a basis for our final exploration of how this rhetoric of voice and anxiety connects Thompson to postcolonialism as a precursor.

---

and witty, was in its detached and unselfish kindness altogether delightful.. But his books had this delightfulness crushed out of them, and deliberately.” Also, on folios 412 and 455, Adrian hears “Voices” which give him confidence in his writing.

## VOICE AND ANXIETY IN THE NOVELS

THERE IS A GENERAL ORIENTATION to sound in the novels, which begins with voice and moves through various other sorts of noise: characterization through idiosyncratic spelling and direct discourse, snippets of English literature embedded in the text by characters reciting verse, noises in nature, lyrical evocation of landscape, even a vaguely felt sense of cultural "dissonance" afflicting the English in India. The central anxiety of the texts is that England and India may be inexorably irreconcilable, and yet must not be. There is a constant sense that some vehicle must be found in order for them to communicate in a mutually respectful fashion. Concentrating on tropes of sound and voice, even to represent irreconcilability, becomes an effort to encourage an as-yet-unheard voice—the voice of a postcolonial sensibility—to prominence. As one character says in *An End of the Hours*: "Everyone that *can* speak, in *any* fashion, *must* speak," (EH, p. 213). Similarly, this discourse must be taken outside of England and English culture proper: "You can't get *anything* done in England—all you can do is criticise and expose the discontent in your own mind."<sup>28</sup> Speaking out is not easy: the delicate suggestion that colonialism must end is difficult enough to make in an English novel at the height of the Empire; even more subtle is the rhetorical challenge of evoking in the discourse of English the inadequacy of that discourse to represent India respectfully; and most subtle of all is the challenge of immolating one's own inadequate colonial discourse so that a postcolonial voice can be heard. To meet these challenges and to deal with the anxieties it provokes, both personal and literary, Thompson's fiction employs this shifting rhetoric of voice: of a collapsing colonial voice and a gathering postcolonial one.<sup>29</sup>

A conspicuous aspect of Thompson's novels is their heavy dependence on manipulations of direct discourse used to achieve characterization and atmosphere. The dialogue of *An Indian Day*, for example, is replete with essentially vocal effects designed to evoke a certain set of understandings normally derived from nuances of spoken language: italics and small capitals, emphatic and generally exotic punctuation, repeated words, phonetic spellings and otherwise idiosyncratic orthography. From the opening to the final scenes these devices are in constant play, as we shall see in many of the examples below.

<sup>28</sup> *So a Poor Ghost* (London: 1933), p. 98.

<sup>29</sup> On Thompson's disaffection with his own novels and the novel form in general, see correspondence with Canton 1924-7; Fisher, 1945; Rushbrooke in general.

The town where the action takes place is not described by the text; instead it is commented upon by some unknown voice in the text, speaking within quotation marks and with characteristic turns of phrase which typify it as possessed of a certain set of English Indian prejudices and predilections: "Vishnuguram? A rotten hole. They haven't got a club, there's an Indian collector, during half the year you can't get a four at bridge. Good shooting, though; jungles, plenty of bears, snipe, and that sort of thing'," (ID, p. 4). This voice is most pointedly different from the narrative voice otherwise dominant in the text, with which it conducts something of an oppositional dialogue: "Suriganj had been 'the best station in Bengal, if you have to be out of Calcutta'; there had been a club, with abundance of drinks and enough men and women to make as many sets at bridge and tennis as you wanted. Within comparatively easy reach had been that *sine que non* of British bliss, things to kill" (ID, p. 4). The shift to the ironical and disparaging tone of the latter half of this citation brings the earlier half into stark relief as being itself a subject of satire: this "voice" of Anglo-India will come under much scrutiny as the text progresses.

Individual variations on this and other voices are used to characterize individuals. The thick-headed soldier is heard dismissing his coolies with, "And *jao jeldily*, and be *choop* about it.... Lord! what a country!" (ID, p. 9). The wife of the police superintendent enters with "Oh, *why* did you come by that *dreadful, dull day* train?" after which we are told, "Mrs. Nixon was lavish in emphasis," (ID, p. 22). We hear the opinions of the earnest evangelical on several occasions, "But their minds are so *dark*," said Jacks. 'When one gets a glimpse into what they *really* think—.' It was his favourite reflection. He left the sentence unfinished—" (ID, p. 62). His Bishop has an even more distinctive accent: "The Church in India-h is growing . . . and-er *growing* . . . and . . . *GROWING*,'" (ID, p. 168). The Missionary College Principal, we are told, "spoke Bengali, which he delighted in using, especially on public occasions, with a strong Lancashire accent and an utter ignoring of its numerous aspirants. He had a masterful way with grammar, and syntax was what he chose it should be. His stresses were as darting and irresponsible as humming-birds; his voice would soar aloft, to plunge down ruthlessly and swiftly on some trivial word," (ID, p. 57). The Indian collector Neogy—"he *did* love to hear his own voice," (ID, p. 52)—is given to making windy speeches according to a misconstrued understanding of English oratory.<sup>30</sup> *An End of the Hours* actually begins with a satirically personified "Voice" making itself too

<sup>30</sup> Compare (AT, p. 131).

obvious on a P & O liner—this is the first line of the novel: “On every ‘passage to India’ there is some woman who talks rot in a loud voice,” (EH, p. 3); a later chapter begins with “The Voice had come from the forward lounge,” (EH, p. 8) and leads to the following comment by an Irishman: “Does it ever strike you English, now, that there’s folk in the world that *aren’t English*, and that they sometimes *overhear* you?... Do you English ever *think* at all? Or stand back from the rot you’ve just been talking, to try to see what it looks like to anyone who isn’t English?” (EH, p. 9-10). At one level this seems to be Thompson’s point in the novel: to indicate that what the English say and write tends to be rot, and it is indeed often overheard by non-English peoples who are not usually in a position to dispute it.

For the most part, the English are characterized according to voice, while Indians are described or depicted according to appearance or behavior; Neogyi above is an exception as a particularly Anglicized Indian. Otherwise, “It was a place of half-baked babus, cringing, insolent, seditious, wholly unprimitive except in their personal habits and sanitation; and a European station that chattered and quarrelled, quarrelled and chattered,” (ID, p. 8). Indians’ discourse in vernacular languages is often rendered indirectly; in this example of two zemindaris who speak no English, everything they say is filtered through the narrator: “Satya Babu had suggested that Jogen Babu should stand as a candidate. What did His Honour think? Of course, a zemindar had other duties; he had the welfare of his tenants to look to. Perhaps he ought not to think of going to Calcutta.... Then Satya Babu spoke. They had wondered, he said, whether either of them—especially his brother, as the senior zemindar—was going to get anything in the next Birthday Honours,” (ID, p. 43). Often this translated discourse operates according to some stock Orientalist paradigm: “Abdul Jubbar Khan, a Mussulman with a vast snowy beard, showed him over the court records with the maximum of courtesy and a minimum of information.... [The files are out of order, provoking a profane expression of exasperation from the English judge.] Abdul Khan looked rebukingly at him. ‘Another irascible Englishman! O race uncontrollable, restless, undignified, extravagant in your passion over trifles!’” (ID, p. 46). When Indians do speak English they often do so in a very fractured fashion: Neogyi’s oratory, for example, or the office gossip of the Courts: “She is *bharjeen*.... She has no kids. Her husband kicked the bucket before two years—at six o’clock Madras time,” (ID, p. 48).<sup>31</sup> *A Farewell to India* begins with a school prizegiving in which

<sup>31</sup> Compare (EH, pp. 62-62), E.P. Thompson (1993), p. 7.

two boys stage a tableaux with dialogue to show off their English: "Now, Jadu, I am glad to mitt with you again, my dear friend.' 'Many grittings to you al-so, my good Madu. I trust that by the bless-ing of God you are stout and strong',"—and so forth, (FI, p. 8-9). The one important Indian in all the novels is a *sannyasi*, Jayananda, who speaks perfect English but who lives outside the community of British or Indian people. Basically in order to have a voice in the novels you have to be English, even if you are Indian. The Indians do have a voice of their own, of course, but it operates beneath and around the text, and the English have no more meaningful access to it than Indians do to the government of the colonial society in which they live. The polarization of cultures is thus posited upon this co-optation of voice by English.

Alden, a missionary and the dominant individual in three of the novels, is also one of the more notably talkative characters. This aspect of his character is often commented upon by others, and he is aware of it himself. He is very self-critical; in this he serves as a mechanism for Thompson to focus into the rhetoric of the text his own general anxieties over the English discourse of India—for demonstrating how he knows his own rather clamorous discourse to be very much implicated, however generous its intentions, in the tendencies and abuses of representation which it simultaneously exposes throughout the rhetoric of English India. Alden struggles constantly with a sense of the futility of the missionary life: it is locally useful, but not generally significant. The same is true of his teaching: he is really only preparing students for the utile goal of passing entrance standards for Calcutta University, but not for any world-wisdom derived from English or Christian culture. And all of his efforts to be sympathetic and respectful do nothing to stem the rising tide of nationalist agitation, and in fact at times seem to exacerbate it. This anxiety is couched specifically in terms of voice: "Our *actions* are so decent and honourable, why—why—*why*—do we always talk as if we were half cad, half imbecile?" (ID, p. 180). It is the discourse which is vexed, not so much the intention behind it—although that, of course, is hopelessly complicated by its faulty manner of expression, which fact also undermines its effectiveness. Alden here gives voice to the self-conscious anxiety the text displays concerning the dissonance between its own aspirations and its own capabilities—socio-political as well as rhetorical.

The English judge from above whose files were out of order, Hamar, is one of Thompson's characters with a "savage sense of fairness," (ID, p. 59) and it has gotten him into trouble even before the first novel begins: he has acquitted several obviously guilty seditionists on the grounds of insufficient evidence and this has estranged him



almost irreparably from most of the Anglo-Indian community. He is not interested, particularly, in ingratiating himself with the Indian community, largely because he finds, like Gregory of "Atonement," that his best efforts at sympathy with and comprehension of India still bring him up against varieties of irreconcilability. In his interaction with the Indians working in his office, this tendency is figured as a matter of voice, and specifically "accent":

With good-natured sarcasm, so suave that it was lost on his listeners, he asked: "You will all be able to understand me even better in a short time?" Ten heads jerked in unison from left to right, in complacent agreement. "No doubt," said the *seristadar*, with a plump effect, as of a large stone dropping in a well. "But at present," said Hamar, "at present we seem to have some difficulty—not much, but a *little*—in following each other." "Because we are not habituated to your Honour's accent," the occasional typist explained. This was a shock to Hamar, who had always prided himself on his freedom from accent." (ID, p. 49)

Accent is a metaphor for prejudice; priding oneself on freedom from it is akin to the sense of fairness by which Hamar so insistently tries to conduct his life, however far short of it he may unwittingly fall. For he is half-aware of this basic inadequacy—at least aware that fairness will not bring him much closer to natural, free and easy communication than will more conventional Anglo-Indian attitudes. He remarks to himself of his compatriots, "How repellent and how attractive!" (ID, p. 11), and he regards some of them—soldiers, for example—according to the same paradox: "impossible in their talk, incredibly circumscribed in attitude and opinions, ill-informed, and bigoted in training and ideas. But in practice often queerly tolerant, and breaking out in unexpected ways. You never knew where they might shame you by some instinctive decency, when your careful thinker and scrupulous official would be ineffably mean, in his just, righteous fashion," (ID, p. 14).

A similar analogical turn involves the chief female character in the texts, Hilda Mannering. She muses on how very much the world belongs to men—being a woman in a man's world is like being an Indian in a British world—and again this is figured specifically in terms of voice and sound. She notes "the different tone that men insensibly [take] when they talk to each other," (ID, p. 206-207), and muses extensively on the efficiency of a colonial civilization in which every man has his job and does it well, to the effectual exclusion of women. Then—

Hilda paused in her bitter thinking, and listened for an audible sound; that vague dissatisfaction which she had felt about her since she came to India seemed to become something that could be heard and touched—from every quarter of the globe seemed to be rolling up a storm of rebellion against this just and efficient masterdom. But there was no sound except the wind whistling quietly to itself in a bamboo copse near by. She laughed at herself detected in an absurdity. All the same, it was not mere fancy;

a ghost *had* walked by her, though eluding vision and beheld in quaking thought alone. Else, why had she started? (ID, p. 209)

This is most pointedly not merely the rhetoric of feminism but also of postcolonialism—the sense of a previously unacknowledged and marginalized power gathering to supplant the old “masterdom.” This gathering has no name; “ghost” is insufficient to describe or even evoke it. But it is moving, “walking by her.” Two factors—the inability to find a name and the sense of its real but exciting threat to the old order that has always named things—determine the operation of this rhetoric of voice and sound, as well as its combined wariness and anticipation. And “though eluding vision” or specific definition of any other sort, this “audible sound” in the rhetoric is sufficient to indicate vast transformations in the near future, and to provoke pervasive anxieties in the present.<sup>32</sup>

The hot weather, such an incontrovertible aspect of Indian life, is represented at one point as a gathering of vocal devices—especially the ones I enumerated just above: characterization by phonetic orthography emphasizing accent and direct discourse (in this case, personification of natural forces through speech), recited English verse, natural noises such as a “singing” bird, lyrical evocation of landscape, and a sense of cultural dissonance. The following passage assembles all these devices within an analogy in which the coming hot weather is the figure for a postcolonial culture; an otherwise inconceivable world is suggested and evoked through vocal tropes which intimate its own developing power to represent itself:

In northern lands we can *feel* the earth gathering herself together to “go through it,” steeling herself for the freezing grip of winter. In India this happens in spring, when the hot weather sends out its first heralds. The fields were withdrawing into themselves in dread—“Now for it!” they seemed to say. “It will be awful—our only chance is to sleep through it.” The *kokil*, beloved of Indian poets, became a burden, with its demoniac laughter and its mocking hysterical shouts. Educated Indians identify this bird with the cuckoo, about which Wordsworth—who made some “nice poems” for Calcutta University—wrote, and they find therein augmented cause for rejoicing in its “sweet song.” Alden was looking up Hamar in his office one morning when a chorus of *kokils*, for no discoverable reason, lacerated the air from a mango outside. A look of ineffable peace flooded the *seristadar*’s face, and he asked:

‘O cuckoo, s’ all I call thee bahrrrd?

Or but a ooandering bhoice?’

A ribald answer was on Alden’s lips, but he remembered how disappointed an Indian friend had been in England when, his mind filled with Shelley, he went to hear a skylark. He told of this; and Hamar knew an American girl who complained that the

<sup>32</sup> Trivedi reads Hilda’s experience of India in sharp contrast to Adela Quested’s; see Trivedi (1993), p. 172: “For her India is a release and an opportunity for independence, vocation, and feminist self-fulfilment, unlike for Adela, to whom it turns out—in a hoary cliché of the Raj, which the novel finally reinforces rather than interrogate—to be an assault, a nightmare, a delusion.”

nightingale "tinkled like a piano," and cherished a grievance against the dying poet who alleged he heard it

*pouring* forth its soul abroad  
In such an ecstasy.

And did not an American poet—a modernist, of course, and a great ornament of "the left wing" in poetry—climb Boar's Hill to hear the Bagley Wood nightingales, with the inevitable reaction for which his whole being confidently yearned? They "sang flat."

"Next time we hear the beastly bird," Alden suggested, "let's try and hear it as Indians." They had done so; putting himself [sic] where Indian minds were, withdrawing for a moment from his own herd-psychology, with cool, sweet, unprejudiced mind each had listened to the *kokil's* shouts at dawn, and had admitted their exhilarating quality. They were the power of that rushing time, flinging itself up in fountains of noise, as in the sky it flung itself up in cascades of changing colour. Hamar knew that never again, in any land, would dawn be fully dawn for him, with that acclamation silent. The *kokil's* "singing" continued the process of enslavement to the land's beauty which the mango fragrance—to our anaemic tastes as over-rich as the *kokil's* cry is over-loud—had begun, the day when he first came to Vishnuguram. The steady croon of the doves through the hot day rejoiced him, also; and the kite's keen of utter abandonment, the screaming of the sky's desolation far aloft, as the bird circled and hung in the dazzling fires. Only the coppersmith's *tonk, tonk*, beginning in the first light and never pausing until the stars came, never changed for him—never became other than a present distress to the brain and a clanging warning of wretchedness to come. (ID, p. 73-75)<sup>33</sup>

The sense is that an English rhetoric is inadequate to perceive an Indian reality, and that its misperception of that reality is actually jarring to the "ear" of English culture at large, as jarring as the noise of the *kokil*. This inadequacy is comprehensive: not even a developing "modernist" rhetoric in American English can catch the sense, but can only hear a nightingale "singing flat." The way forward is to "try and hear it as Indians." Through this rhetoric of sound an interpretative intimacy can be briefly sustained—one can begin to appreciate the local aesthetic ("the steady croon of doves") in its own terms, as opposed to one's own; and one can even "rejoice" in the alien and hostile environment (the "scream of the sky's desolation"). The sense is that the hot weather—a postcolonial India—truly can be conceived, and borne, and even actively celebrated. But equally, there is a sense that no colonial Englishman, not even the most sympathetic, can throw himself whole heartedly into this aural vision: some sounds, "the coppersmith's *tonk, tonk*" will always strike a minatory note, "a warning of the wretchedness to come" in the process of achieving that postcolonialism—wretchedness of forsaking a long established faith and investment, wretchedness of disruption generally, wretchedness perhaps even of violence. Thus this passage is not itself productive of a thoroughly new aesthetic. Rather it is precursive of much to come—

<sup>33</sup> Compare (FI, p. 37).

resonantly, vocally, and anxiously precursive of a dawn: a "rushing time, flinging itself up in fountains of noise."

This "noise" is also figured in the form of a mysterious booming roar—remarkably redolent of the *Ou-Boum* of the Marabar Caves in *A Passage to India*. It is interesting that in his article comparing Forster and Thompson, Harish Trivedi does not comment upon this.<sup>34</sup> The closest he comes is the following rather general remark upon which he does not elaborate: "Unlike Forster's 'Ou-boum,' which is starkly and ominously elemental, the supernatural in Thompson is vestigially historical; for his ghosts represent the accumulated past of the Raj," (p. 187). In this Trivedi seems to have missed some of the resonance of Thompson's work in his effort to compare Forster's unfavorably with it. These "ghosts" are the omnipresent *bhuts* which populate all of Thompson's novels, and which we saw above manifesting themselves to Hilda Mantering. The evidence of Thompson's rhetoric indicates that they are indeed meant to be understood as being in some sense "elemental," and that beyond being "vestigially historical" and "representing the accumulated past of the Raj," they are also rhetorically redolent of the *future* in a postcolonial India—again, as we saw in Hilda's experience interpreted through a rhetoric of voice. The ghosts suggest an unseen Indian audience, restive and growing—like the one we explored above with *The Other Side of the Medal* and Thompson's historiography—a population waiting to achieve a more substantial voice once the noisy British have silenced such various misrepresentations (histories, novels, legal structures, the Civil Service) as have defined their entire colonial presence. But also the *bhuts* represent the anxious vexations in the present rhetoric of English India, and Thompson's complicated strategies for dealing with those anxieties and figuring them into his texts. However, first let us examine the roar, and then return to the question of a rhetorically "elemental" understanding of it versus a "vestigially historical" one.

The roar in Thompson's text occurs in a hill cave called Trisunia described in a sequence of passages which contain other echoes to Forster's text: images of multiplicity, contingency, and ancientness:

It was a characteristic enough hill, one of many thousands, of every height from twenty feet up to several thousand, that are scattered over India. You may see them from the train, as you go through central India or the jungles of Chota Nagpur or Orissa. They stud the Mysore plateau, they sprinkle the Madras plain; they rise up everywhere from the thorn-pampas of Rajputana. When the volcanoes were lighting vast sheets of shallow ocean or the huge rivers were silting those sheets up with soil filched from Himalayan peaks and gulleys, these rocks were there, blazing and

<sup>34</sup> "Passage or Farewell?: Politics of the Raj in E. M. Forster and E. J. Thompson," (1993).



smoldering. The geologist finds no fossils in them. The temples of post-Aryan India seem alien, an annoying excrescence of yesterday.... (ID, p. 182)

If you crossed Trisunia's summit, and began the northern descent, you reached a rocky surface pitted with caves and cracks....

One of the caves went deep into the hill. No one had ever been interested or hardy enough to explore it. Its mouth was matted with creepers and the dark-spotted pink flowers of the tiger's claws, the dwarf shrub with sharp, gripping talons. The rocks at its entrance harbored Russell's vipers—you were watching a mottled piece of rock and soil, and suddenly it would develop sluggish, sullen movement. It was from the unknown heart of this cave that Hara Deva the Destroyer was now roaring. Terrified crowds had heard him, at the spring festival; but the rumour had died away, only to be revived tenfold as the miseries of famine grew to their height. Far over the plains his voice boomed.... (ID, pp. 186-7)

In the event, the roaring is found to be a diversionary tactic employed by gun-smugglers trying to frighten people away from their cache, and to divert police investigations away from their activities. A raid of the caves reveals nothing, but Hamar and Police Chief Nixon stumble upon a band of young men carting boxes of ammunition out of an underground chamber not far away (ID p. 196). It has all been a nationalist plot. That the weaponry and munitions have been stored underground is analogous to the "vast subterranean anger and murderous hatred upon whose signs two Englishmen had come that morning," (ID, p. 204).

Insofar as Thompson's text can be compared with Forster's this is an area of rich rhetorical intersection. Thompson's text is itself an echo of the echoes in Forster's—like Trisunia, *An Indian Day* is "a place with magnificent echoes," (ID, p. 190)—and (even though we must not go into much detail over the correspondence in order to stay on the subject), it is remarkable that the connection occurs through this roaring voice. In the narrative, the roar in the cave is nothing more than a distraction, but this can be seen to constitute a comment by Thompson's text on the resonance of Forster's within the discourse of English India: Forster's novel is like a roaring Trisunia distracting from a more urgent cry for attention smoldering just beneath British lines of perception, and which desperately needs to be addressed—nationalism.

This is more or less Trivedi's reading of the interface between the two texts, which might also be said to suggest that though Forster's text finds its noises unintelligible, like so much "elemental" roaring, if he had dug a little deeper beneath the Orientalist paradigms of his perception he might have unearthed a very specific language of dissent and an organized system of nationalist resistance.<sup>35</sup> But while Thompson's text makes the fact of this nationalist agitation obvious in its realist portrayal of Bengal in the early

<sup>35</sup> Trivedi's other published work (1984, 1991) emphasizes politics in literature. See also Trivedi's introduction to Thompson, *Rabindranath Tagore* (1991).



1920s, as Trivedi demonstrates, it seems to come up against Orientalist paradigms of its own. The moment the roar is explained and the implied sympathy for the cause, if not the behavior, of nationalism is introduced into the text, a sudden welter of Orientalist imagery intrudes and works against that sympathy. In the first case, the cliché that every young Indian male is a seditious radical is actually borne out by the image of the gun-smugglers. Also, the police regard their activity, now that they have squelched it, with a certain degree of respect: "pluck" is the word inherited from a culture of Kipling and imperial adventure literature: "It takes some pluck to handle all those things we saw today. And think of it, Hamar! Imagine yourself a young Indian! And you know every inch of this land, and you feel you can fool these sahebs and tie them up in its jungles, and have them in a fog all the time, because they *don't* know things, don't know what the folk think or feel, don't know *anything*! You'd want to take a hand in the movement," (ID, p. 199). This falls directly in line with the rhetoric of the Great Game and that paternalism which respects martial qualities in an Indian as rendering him a worthy adversary, a sporting challenge. Furthermore, when Hamar does enter into the creative act of imagining himself a young Indian—an activity comparable to the rhetorical activity of these novels, which attempts imaginatively to recreate what conditions are like in India so that readers may understand—he lapses quickly away from a rhetoric of modern nationalism to a confused parade of Mutiny ikons and pseudo-nationalist myths, all overhung with faintly prurient thoughts of exotic women—the martial East conflated with the sensual one, each a species of the same Orientalist predetermination:

He imagined himself young, and an Indian, sensitive to that point which to us seems sheerly maudlin, touched to hot tears by any songs which spoke of the land as 'Mother'; and he was wandering in the wildly beautiful desolation which Hilda Mannering had made eternally for him. Here might an Indian have seen—or imagined that he saw—some lady of his own land, slender and exquisite, standing framed in the greenwood of sal and *siris* and drooping tamarind. Here might he have visualized the *Banai Lakshmi*, the "Forest-Queen," riding through her paradise, as Indian queens had done aforetime—the Rani of Jhansi whom our bullets slew in battle, or that Moslem lady who for seven years ruled and led her armies. (ID, p. 200)

While Thompson's texts acknowledge that nationalism has a voice, they do not ever reproduce that voice and consistently swerve away from opportunities to do so—actively implying that they cannot. Also, the governing consciousness of the text finds it difficult to accept the violence of nationalism, and realizes that this is a principal factor in the antipathy of the Raj to nationalism. The nationalists in "Atonement" comprise another example of this: they are in chains, speak only in a defensive fashion, and must

rely on the paternalistic benignity of an Englishman to "set them free" in the end. Their voice, in short, depends upon Thompson for expression—and this hobbles their potential resonance. In *A Farewell to India*, Alden argues with one Dinabandhu Tarkachuramani; Alden does most of the talking, and is scornful of the real motivations behind nationalism and its insensitivity to the consequences of violence: "Death at the hands of England seems a grand going out. You can dream and dream of it, and see yourselves the heroes of films you will never witness, novels you will never read, songs you will never hear. But for some of you it will be death at the hands of your own side'," (FI, p. 80). Dinabandhu does not respond to this, although it affects him; he is initially silenced by it, in fact: "The Indian started, as though a voice heard faintly in hallucination had grown intelligible and significant. He had ceased to listen to Alden," (FI, p. 80); eventually he marshals his thoughts to make a predictably defiant remark: "'India has been subjugated by blood, she shall win freedom by blood,'" (FI, p. 81)—and with this he leaves in a huff. The nationalist case has not been put forward at all, and even though Alden's attempt to engage in dialogue with it has been portrayed as stifling and equally hostile, Alden has been given the rhetorical upper hand—or rather, he has had to be given the upper hand because the discourse of English India cannot represent the discourse of nationalism. The inadequacy under which the text labors is built into Alden's lack of constraint, which results not only in the alienation of the very nationalist voice he is trying to encourage in dialogue, but also in the collapse of his own discourse into anxious self-consciousness: after Dinabandhu leaves, "Alden [is] too appalled and ashamed to say anything," (FI, p. 81). At the same time, Dinabandhu's intractability at least allows him to insist that given the chance, he would have something to say: "Why is any other than a peaceful solution unthinkable? It is very thinkable to us," (FI, p. 81).

The text is trying to communicate several ideas at once, and on different levels: the inescapable Orientalism of colonial discourse, the inarticulability of nationalist discourse within that discourse, and the inaudibility of a gathering postcolonial discourse. The desire is that it be possible to extrapolate a postcolonial sensibility from this polyphony of the rhetoric of anxiety and the rhetoric of voice. The Orientalism in the text is something which Thompson is very much aware of; he knows it hampers his voice in the goal of representing an India no longer understood according to the rhetoric of colonialism; equally, he knows it hampers a nationalist voice emerging, which is in any case itself implicated in the rhetoric of colonialism. All of this makes him anxious, and he figures this anxiety into his text, along with the figurations of voice, in a pre-emptive

attempt to prevent it from disabling him altogether—while at the same time realizing that even this stands in the way of his true responsibility, which is to fall silent so that the developing postcolonial voice can be heard.

To deal with this tension, Thompson often returns to one particular strategy, perhaps inherited from Forster: the trope of the *bhut* or ghost. This is the rhetoric which Trivedi has characterized in Thompson as “vestigially historical,” as opposed to the “elemental” in Forster. But it seems that Thompson’s dependence upon an “elemental” rhetoric is essential to his status as a precursor, largely because of the way it connects to his rhetoric of anxiety and voice. The notion that Thompson’s supernatural is “vestigially historical” derives from such comments as this from *A Farewell to India*: “You can’t see straight, with so many *bhuts* trying to use your one set of retina and visual nerves. You have the ghosts of the American Revolution, of Ireland, of South Africa, all crowding in upon one vision. God help her when she comes to that council-table. For she wants to be decent and honest and fair,” (FI, p. 93). But this use of *bhuts* spirals quite rapidly out of control, and furthermore Thompson clearly feels himself loosing grip of it. At the end of the following citation Alden rounds off his comments about *bhuts* with an awkward disclaimer: “It’s nothing I can put down, so that it will *seem* sense.” He then asks Hilda merely to “listen” to the fact that he is speaking—in other words, he emphasizes the use of voice over the details of what that voice is saying. The fact that the voice is being rather Orientalist (Alden speaks of a sublime force in India expelling the British) is rendered productive not as a specific idea but as a tool for indicating the collapsed discourse of English India—and of the fact that at least one Englishman is aware of the collapse, however little he can do to develop an alternate voice. Highlighting this collapse constitutes a precursive endorsement of the development of a postcolonial alternative—specifically in terms of voice:

‘I’m beginning to think that there’s something elemental in this land, that’s in revolt against us. It’s ceasing to be a matter for argument, although Gandhi occasionally unbends so far as to put up what he’s pleased to call argument. I never can see why he bothers even as much as he does. I shouldn’t waste time arguing, if I had small-pox and fever on my side, and the sun and the moon and the very sods of the ground.’

‘I’m afraid I don’t understand.’

‘I’ve said already that I’m glad you don’t. I think the age from time to time, in one land or another, gets sick of a certain people, and gets rid of them. It isn’t reason, it isn’t even the sword, that kicks them out. It’s the *bhuts*. They’re doing it now with the English, all over the world, and most of all in India.’

‘Can the world find any better people?’

'No. It can't. At any rate,' he said sturdily, 'they are my people, the people whose ways I understand, and I'm going to stick by them. But the age is tired of us, and wants a change. I guess it's going to have one.'

'Robin, honestly—'

'I told you, Hilda, that you wouldn't be able to see any sense in what I was going to say. It's nothing I can put down, so that it will *seem* sense. But will you listen?' (FI, p. 117)

Thompson here relies on the inescapability of the "elemental" Orientalist paradigm to render the difficulty and collapse of his own discourse productive. Most of what Alden says is pointedly ridiculous; the more ridiculous he makes it, the more he can indicate how ridiculous is his entire discourse. He does not want Hilda to understand the specifics of what he saying—rather he wants to stress that *anything* he might say is going to be meaningless in a larger context just as anything an Indian might say (Gandhi, in his example) is going to seem incomprehensible in a smaller context. Consequently Alden urges Hilda merely to be in the habit of *listening*. Do not expect sense or understanding; but *listen* for what ever will come along, like listening to the clangorous *kokil* and trying "to hear it as Indians."

Thus Trivedi's notion that Forster's ou-boum is "elemental" (to its disadvantage) whereas Thompson's is not (to its advantage) seems backwards. Thompson's use of the elemental seems entirely self-conscious and significant; his sense of the challenge of writing in English about India depends to some degree on it. The rhetoric of voice is linked to the rhetoric of anxiety through this dependence, which may be formulated in the following productive anxiety upon which Thompson's fiction meditates continually: that the discourse of colonial English India has nothing to say, but it has a voice; while the discourse of postcolonial Indian English has much to say, but is given no voice.

The ultimate complication, of course, is that India *does* have a voice—though it is not one which, in Thompson's view, England can comprehend as yet, and so he must represent it as nonexistent or "elemental." This accounts for a great deal of tension—some of which can be observed in the turn of the following passage by which Alden hears Gandhi and decides, because of what he is saying, that he cannot be real. Alden cannot conceive of a living human speaking with a postcolonial voice, and so he represents that voice as "fey" and "larger" than life, although preparing to "burst into the Age and shatter it." Also, this is prepared for through the trope of Gandhi as the "voice of a nation":

[Alden] saw and heard a man who had ceased to be one of us, and had become an elemental being—a gust blowing up from the earth, a passion enclosed (and barely enclosed) in a wizened, worn-out body. He listened to economics that were twenty years and more out of date, and their mistakes were as nothing beside the fact that



centuries of poverty and exploitation had found a voice. Through a human reed suffering was speaking—not its own, but a nation's. He heard history grotesquely at variance with actuality; and this, too, was nothing beside the truth that the whole East had its terrible indictment against the white beast that has ranged the planet with such vision and cruel strength and ruthless purpose. He was troubled, as a man who loved and honoured this frail, human wisp, by the undertone of weariness, as from a will whose resources are exhausted, though the driving fire remains that must urge it on to self-destruction. Behind the speaker were forces of ruin, which he was serving, though aware of them, and anxious to escape them. 'The man's fey,' he thought. 'It is no longer Gandhiji that is speaking, but something that is going to burst into the Age, and to shatter it.' (FI, p. 143-4)

In simplest terms, what Alden is trying to deal with is the sense that "we are living on into another age. We haven't a new technique, and we are afraid to use the one that we learnt in the age that has gone," (FI, p. 119). Similarly he is afraid of the new "technique" represented by Gandhi—he does not and cannot understand it, even though he realizes that it is better equipped for the future than he is. Gandhi, in other words, here represents postcolonialism. Thompson cannot speak with Gandhi's voice, and cannot reproduce it in his fiction. But he can represent it in stark contrast to his own faltering voice. Through such transfigurations as render Gandhi "fey," nationalism "subterranean," and the general gathering idea of postcolonialism an "elemental" roar, he can represent "something stirring," (FI, p. 119) without ever specifically describing it in his vexed and misrepresentative voice, his anxious rhetoric.

SUCH SCENES AS THIS, the Orientalist ones in which Hamar and Nixon try to "imagine" themselves as young Indian nationalists, and the anxious ones where the *bhuts* become the only available voice for imminent change—all of these can be said to contribute to the argument that Thompson is a precursor to postcolonialism, if one reads them through the tropes of anxiety and voice. It is possible to construe Thompson's collapse of discourse as symptomatic of the anxiety in the rhetoric of English India over the task of accommodating a nationalist perspective, and over the implied paternalism of intending or pretending to give voice to it. Also, the Orientalist imagery displays the concomitant failure of the rhetoric of English India to make that accommodation, falling back on a drastically hackneyed rhetoric which stands in stark contrast. This calls attention to nationalist rhetoric both by its egregious swerving away from it, and by highlighting its Orientalist opposite. And it posits the urgent need to develop a more sophisticated, less contorted rhetoric for "imagining" the "young Indian" point of view—a discourse of difficulty imagining itself supplanted by a discourse of clarity. Some rhetoric which will both preclude further sedition and encourage open expression



must develop. But until then, if this involuted rhetoric of anxiety and voice can suggest the need for changed perceptions—even if it fails in its other goal of transforming Indian and English irreconcilability into truly interactive communication—then it is functioning as a precursor.

## CONCLUSION

IT MAY BE that Thompson's biggest disadvantage was his sense of fairness, which provoked vast anxiety and hampered his voice. His attempts to accommodate it and to render a still-colonial discourse productively precursive to postcolonialism were valiant, and seem to have had some sort of diaphanous effect, but they also alienated him from both British and Indian writers to different degrees. There was no way he could be utterly impartial—and by extension, no way an English discourse of India could be a 'fair' means of representing India.<sup>36</sup> He strove to alter that discourse, through his manipulations of form and his emphasis on a rhetoric of anxiety and voice—and through these to suggest that a new rhetoric was growing. In this, he stands in an illogical relationship to postcolonialism: incapable of contributing directly to it, but determined to help set the stage for it, even if this determination seems to render his rhetoric more regressive than precursive. And yet even that regression, from hindsight, can be seen to represent the inherent inadequacy of his own discourse and the need to encourage a developing new one. He more or less realized that this rhetorical challenge would mean the annihilation of his own voice—but stopped just short of falling silent to acknowledge that; he had invested too much in a rhetoric of voice, in the service of fairness and atonement, to be capable of silence.

With this in mind, it will be interesting now to turn to Forster—who opts for a rhetoric more inherently capable of accommodating silence: a rhetoric of gesture, which points to postcolonialism, rather than attempting to prefigure its voice within a selfconsciously inadequate discourse. Forster can be understood in the light of Thompson's self-aware but inevitably colonial discourse; and Thompson can be seen as a link between Forster's context of vision and Woolf's context of frustration. In relation to these two, Thompson's case is productively transitional. The best and final testament to this—final only because we must move on—comes in his own characteristically anxious voice:

"I say, Damn all sense of absolute rightness and justice...." But did he say it? Was there a man who raged more, both inwardly and at frequent intervals openly and against his own departments and people, merely because of deeds and words and attitudes that were less than fair? This had brought down his life in failure; yet it persuaded him to carry on, and he would go the same way to the end. There are those who persist because they have had a vision of the "Ideas" that live in God's presence—somewhere in this universe, they are assured, is the very source and norm

<sup>36</sup> See E.P. Thompson (1993), p. 103-4: "There was not, in 1922 nor in 1930, any such thing as an extra-national, extra-imperial position of impartiality; behind Thompson's 'fairness' Bengalis could too easily detect the prejudices of an Englishman."

of all that is true and noble; and the things on which man's hasty eyes fall and by which they are rejoiced before death closes them for ever, these get whatever grace is theirs because the "Idea" has found in them some broken or closed expression. [He] *had seen* fairness—absolute, sheer, unbetrayed, uncompromised fairness, as between race and race and individual and individual. And to bring that fairness into human actions he would have died at any moment's notice, quietly and with happiness.

He had not yet got it right. (NF, p. 259-60)

## CHAPTER FOUR

# E. M. FORSTER

---

### INTRODUCTORY

FORSTER'S RHETORIC eludes easy definition; it is not thoroughly modernist, nor purely realist, and certainly not postcolonial. Still, his work can be examined in all of these contexts, especially with respect to the manipulations of such rhetorical devices as rhythm and motif. Forster uses a distinct rhetoric to circumvent what he perceives as the limits of language and the novel form—indirect devices for communicating large, vague concepts like the desire for friendship, class and racial harmony, and the moral dimension of questions such as who shall inherit England and the Earth. But as much as he is a moralist he is suspicious of moralizing; and his strategies for conveying both his ideas and his suspicions about whether such ideas can be communicated are in many ways more interesting than the ideas themselves. Certainly other writers have approached these questions more resonantly than Forster, though not always with his particular finesse and indirection. One way of situating his distinct strategic evasions is to regard their associations with other rhetorical experiments, from his own period and subsequent to it. In his subtler rhetorical strategies Forster departs from the inheritance of critical and social realism, approaches some of the achievements of modernism, and with *A Passage to India* also releases energies into the idea of the English Indian novel which have wide ramifications for the fiction and criticism of postcolonialism. This relationship is not a specifically causal one, not a matter of directly traceable influences—the character of most modernist work being more overtly associated with the avant-garde than Forster's novel is, and the character of most postcolonial work being more explicitly counter-imperial. Rather, the relations between Forster, modernism, and postcolonialism are more associative, and suggest an analysis which is more sensitive to associative mechanisms. Said's ideas on polyphony and transgression are theoretically and practically relevant in this respect particularly. In response to all this, the following chapter will involve not so much issues of genre or idea or representation, but instead will operate according to a notion of *gesture*: a rhetoric of implication and allusion which gently questions hierarchy instead of inadvertently perpetuating it, an interpretative consciousness of limits combined with subtle strategies for overcoming them.

That this resistance and self-awareness prefigure the motivating tenets of postcolonialism as much as of modernism derives from Said's idea that modernist

literary culture developed partly as a response to and reflective of the decay of imperialism as a dominant socio-political system (see CI, pp. 228-229). Said, furthermore, acknowledges the heavy influence of Raymond Williams, particularly *The Country and the City* (1973) and late work on modernism and theories of cultural studies which also link the legacy of imperialism to the inexorable co-optation of the avant-garde by post-war capitalist consolidation.<sup>1</sup> Earlier in this thesis I have tried to demonstrate Woolf's writing precursively observing this phenomenon without being an agent of it, and Thompson's work erring in the opposite direction by striving to be involved too self-consciously. I would like now to show some of Forster's texts introducing a lightness of touch into the debate through a rhetoric which both confounds and evokes his relation to realism, modernism, and postcolonialism. I would like to show how he gestures toward each genre, and that for at least one rhetorical position which has become more fully developed since his major work, he is a gentle and suggestive precursor.

Said identifies Forster's rhetoric mainly as a mechanism of irony; Kermode as symbolism; others as a perilous humanism, a departure from the Liberal imagination, a sort of comic mysticism, a personal voice, a quest, indirection, and so on.<sup>2</sup> Each of these approaches is as valid as the others—Forster's elusiveness tends inherently to provoke a polyvocal response—but insofar as postcolonialism is concerned, the notion of gesture seems newly suggestive because gesture inherently concerns the beyond, the post-position. Also gesture is intrinsically resistant to the domination of definition, being essentially ungrammatical, and this resistance of the dominative mode has been one of the general instincts of postcolonialism, developed in a great variety of ways. The general momentum of Forster's work (all of it, not simply *A Passage to India*, although we shall be mainly concerned with that novel) is to resist dominative modes and definitive norms of various sorts—from the middle-class conventions of "Sawston" and of the Wilcox's England to any specific statement of what actually happened in the Marabar Caves.<sup>3</sup> In this it is similar to the general momentum in postcolonialism to

<sup>1</sup> Williams (1973, 1989). Said discusses Williams' book in (CI, pp. 98-105, etc.); see also "Media, Margins, and Modernity," a joint interview with Said and Williams, printed as an appendix to Williams (1989), p. 181: "My (Said's) work since *Orientalism* has really depended very much on Raymond's work...."

<sup>2</sup> Said (CI, pp. 241-8, esp. p. 245); Kermode (1958); Crews (1962); Trilling (1944); Stone (1966); Colmer (1975); Shusterman (1965); Graham (1988).

<sup>3</sup> See Trilling (1944), p. 17, on Forster "removing the heroism of his heroes," and compare Forster, "The Gods of India", in *Albergo Empedocle* (1971), p. 223: "Whatever can be stated must be temporary."



resist the impositions of representation, language, and form handed down as colonial inheritances. One of the major besetting challenges of postcolonialism, in the English-speaking world at any rate, has been the use of the structures of English language and culture to resist a history of English-dominated imperialism. Various strategies have been employed to achieve this resistance—manipulations of language, character, plot, setting, etc.—but Forster's rhetoric of gesture is one of the earliest and most effective. Gesture is not essentially confined within the English language or any language—which is not to say it is universally communicative, but rather that it depends upon some implied correspondence, some common ground of interpretation, an awareness of which it calls attention to; this then has the effect of suggesting a faint sort of community between parties without proclaiming it unwieldily, or enforcing it inappropriately. Gesture recalls into an atmosphere of segregation a basis for community, and does so without the potentially divisive interpolations of language.

Two points, then: one is based on the notion that the discourse of postcolonialism, like realism and modernism before it, is vexed at best, or at worst degrades under some apparently inexorable tendency to perpetuate the polarizations of colonialism to the point where the desired communication between poles becomes again impossible; the effort here is to show that Forster's precursive gestures seem often to accomplish what even the rhetoric of later postcolonialism does not. Secondly, Forster's rhetoric is something of a model for the methodology of this chapter, and as such fulfills the promises of this thesis' introduction and impels its analysis toward a gathering conclusion: insofar as Forster's rhetoric can be seen both to identify this vexation in the postcolonial situation (an essentially interpretative insight) and also to provide an alternative discourse to supplant it (an essentially performative activity)—insofar as his rhetoric is both critical and creative in these ways, it suggests the basis for a methodology *oriented to* but *not aligned with* the discourse of postcolonial theory and practice. This chapter attempts both to explain and demonstrate these ideas.

Concerning the first point, now and throughout the chapter I want to dispute the familiar notion that *A Passage to India* perpetuates the solipsism of an irretrievably frustrated discourse between East and West. The echoing Ou-Boum and all that it suggests concerning the Marabar Caves, what transpires in and around them, and how this pulses throughout the novel, most emphatically do *not* endorse or imply some essential unintelligibility inherent in the relationship between British and Indian cultures. Let us call this interpretative tendency the Liberal Orientalist sublime. Forster can certainly be associated with this given the traditions he emerges from and statements

he has made in other places than this novel—which we will briefly discuss below. But even irrespective of his personal opinions on the matter, which are debatable, it is possible to read this text as actively working against such an idea through a texture of gesture. Indeed a large part of the point of exploring the text through the notion of gesture is to disavow this idea of a Liberal sublime—or at least, as Suleri does for Burke, to replace it with a new sublime, this time a discourse not of difficulty but of gesture. Far from perpetuating many of the Liberal distillations of Orientalism, as Said and so many others have suggested—the prejudice that the West is the realm of sharp distinctions and administrative efficiency, the East of vague possibilities and categorical chaos—Forster's text, as long as it is read with sufficiently respectful scrutiny, quite efficiently counteracts both this interpretative tendency as well as the subtle difficulties of resisting it. Scrutiny is the key—for Forster, as well as for the task of reading him. In many ways, the text has been never read closely enough—not yet, not here—and presumably never will be, being essentially subversive of anything so definitive as interpretation. What Ashis Nandy says of Indian culture, with a symptomatic flexibility of tone, might equally well be said of Forster's approach to it: "Probably the uniqueness of Indian culture lies not so much in a unique ideology as in the society's traditional ability to live with cultural ambiguities and to use them to build psychological and even metaphysical defenses against cultural invasions."<sup>4</sup> The text itself, like the vision of India which forms its context, is "not a promise, only an appeal" (PI, p. 128)—an invitation, a desire, an exquisite hope. And elaborating as it does upon all these ideas specifically, it constitutes a subtle gesture and a quiet inspiration to succeeding passages to and from India—passages, in effect, to postcolonialism.<sup>5</sup>

The second point from above derives from the first, and is intended to demonstrate what Said calls in *Musical Elaborations*, a "magisterial narrowing of focus and with it a deepening of scrutiny," (ME, p. 103). This scrutiny is at once both a creative and a critical methodology, which is to say it occurs in Forster's text as much as in this reading of it, both of which strive for an "effect of a lateral movement outward,

<sup>4</sup> (1983), p. 107; see also Ganguly (1990).

<sup>5</sup> Forster's influence on the subsequent development of the novel in India—and on how English writing in India from before his own contribution to the field is regarded—has been much discussed and will not form the general basis of this chapter. See Sujit Mukherjee (1993): "More important than the connection between Forster and the growing Indian practice of writing novels in English is the fact that it was *A Passage to India* (1924) which summed up and at the same time gave long life to the tradition of Anglo-Indian fiction. This longevity embraced not only the novels that have come after but also those which preceded it, because Forster's novel enables us to look both ways and find links that were waiting to be 'only connected'." Also Hemenway (1975); Rubin (1986); Narasimhan (1976), ch. 12; Naik (1991); and Bibliographical Appendix for other studies of English Indian fiction.

expanding slowly and contemplatively." The Introduction to this thesis promised that each chapter "from the theoretical intonation through the literary historical research to the scrutinizing close reading of *A Passage to India*," would be part of a lateral movement intended as an expanding gesture toward its own ideas, rather than another perpetuation of fairly familiar vexations of postcolonial discourse. This chapter is a more inherently performative evocation of the ideas it perceives in and around Forster's text than a restatement of them in different words, a contemplative *process* rather than a static interpretation. The novel, its relationship to modernism and its part in the developing process of postcolonialism, and this elaboration upon that relationship and process, all proceed from the same spirit: as Said has it, the "pleasures and discoveries" are premised "upon not asserting a central authorizing identity, upon enlarging the community of hearers and players beyond the time taken, beyond the extremely concentrated duration provided by the performance occasion," (ME, p. 105). Thus this chapter and this thesis as a whole hope to achieve more than a passive resonance, and to be understood as contributing to the performative, developmental process of postcolonialism. Rather than striving for critical distance and the illusion of interpretative objectivity, themselves species of authority, the chapter participates, according to the inspiration of the texts it reads, in that "community of hearers and players" by way of affirming and representing the potent desire in Forster's novel for the very idea of community. Of course chapter and novel both fall short of that objective—which is thereby to be understood as "not a promise, only an appeal," (PI, p. 128) as something which will be achieved "not yet, not here," (PI, p. 312). This chapter's awareness of its limitations is not intended to be excused by deliberately intimate associations with Forster's text—but it is inspired by them: the methodology is critically intimate, rather than critically distant, with a text and a context which themselves encourage and insist on the expansion of intimacy.

There is, furthermore, an intentional repetitiveness built into the chapter—a system of theme and variations akin to what Said exemplifies with the late work of Strauss (to repeat and expand upon the phrase cited just above): "quite extraordinary transfigurations of the variation idea . . . [which are essays] in almost pure repetition and contemplation. Each of this handful of works is poignantly summational, as if Strauss had been trying to recapitulate the ethos of his craft in various musical genres.... But the overall effect is of a magisterial narrowing of focus, and with it a deepening of scrutiny, so that measure by measure he allowed himself to repeat an earlier idea but also to vary it almost microscopically," (ME, p. 102-3). The effort here

in this chapter, as with Said's reading of Strauss, is to demonstrate how the summational quality of Forster's novel evokes the integral variety of genres and forms developing in English literature toward an English literature of India, and beyond that to a more explicitly postcolonial voice; also, the effort is to demonstrate how this aspect of Forster can be taken as a methodological model for the general ideas about precursors to postcolonialism explored throughout the thesis. The analysis repeats and varies images from the texts, strategies for regarding them, even individual words for describing them; in its later sections, it highlights different sections of scenes discussed before, and even discusses the same scenes in different ways. The repetitions and variations of this chapter, in short, are a part of a similar magisterial narrowing of focus and deepening of scrutiny.

THUS THREE FORCES are operating here: Forster's novel, the general context of critical and creative continuity and community by which it understands the dream of a postcolonial vision, and this reading of those processes. Together these constitute an attempt at "a mode of thinking through or thinking with the integral variety of human cultural practices, generously, non-coercively, and, yes, in a utopian cast, if by utopian we mean, worldly, possible, attainable, knowable," (ME, p. 105). The methodology here, then, is a deepening of scrutiny in a utopian cast.

One might ask, is it possible to scrutinize *A Passage to India* more deeply?<sup>6</sup> Among the vast variety of motifs and devices at play in the novel, so many of which have been explored in such detail by numerous critics and readers, some stones have been left unturned—specifically those which demonstrate how the notion of gesture is conveyed through certain images in the text. I shall examine the general notion of gesture by exploring the use and significance of the word and idea in the context of Forster's thinking about the novel form, modernism, and India. Following this, I shall turn to a simultaneous exploration of three major motifs in *A Passage to India* which elaborate upon and enact the notion of gesture. The motif of the hand is subtle, and is appropriate for a device connoting gesture and indication, instead of description. The intertwining double motif of invitation and rape—gestures of an ironically tragic intimacy—is essential but implicit, and equally concerned with "unspeakable"

<sup>6</sup> MacDowell (1973), which was published more than 20 years ago, counts 729 published studies of the novel, and includes *Passage* with *Moby Dick*, *Ulysses*, and *Wuthering Heights* in the list of most discussed novels in English. Levine (1971) summarizes all of the criticism on the novel up to 1966. There must be an equal amount which has appeared since then. See also, for Forster's own works, Kirkpatrick (1985).

languages of desire and the frustration of desire. And the presence in the text of strange, uncanny, or otherwise inarticulable circumstances constitutes an evasion of language and an investment instead in a discourse of gesture. These three motifs, among all the others, are part of Forster's general pattern of infringement on the rhetoric of realism which tends toward the rhetoric of modernism; they also contribute toward the process of the postcolonial striving for a rhetoric which can both operate within the discourse of the hegemonic western metropolis and resist co-optation by its more imperially complicitous historical and theoretical paradigms. Basically, these motifs function as resonant precursors to some of the strategies desired and confounded by much contemporary postcolonial theory because they have seen further than the solipsistic blockages of alterity, frustration, and voicelessness. All this constitutes a general texture of hopefulness, of futurity which implies that neither the novel nor this elaboration upon it need describe, nor even specifically envision, the reality of a postcolonial world—rather, each must present the idea that such a world is gestured toward, as well as the process by which that gesturing happens. Forster's uninterpretable text provides for one of the more truly enabling interpretative stances within postcolonialism: the self-awareness that as a creative and critical mode postcolonialism is itself a process of resisting reification, a deferral, a transition—that postcolonialism is itself a precursor.



INDIA AND *A PASSAGE TO INDIA*: LETTERS TO MASOOD

BEFORE DELVING into the analysis of gesture in *A Passage to India*—which notion, one may notice, is being consistently deferred by other interpolating critical exigencies, but which deferral seems curiously consistent with its own claim to modernist affiliations with the dissipations and delays of Mann, Joyce, Woolf, Eliot, and Proust—before arriving at a discussion of gesture, it is worthwhile anchoring these intervening turns and speculations in something more solid. Forster's interest in modernism in many ways parallels his interest in India. Some newly surfaced letters to his dear friend Syed Ross Masood reveal particularly interesting thinking about the process of creating *A Passage to India* and how this was wrought up in simultaneous challenges to Forster's mind concerning modernism, the novel form, and how such things applied to India. What follows, then, is intended as a process of situating the theoretical speculations above in some literary historical facts.

Forster's friendship with Masood was the primary inspiration behind *A Passage to India*. In a lecture read in Rome and Milan in 1959 on the three countries most prominent in his novels—Italy, England, and India—Forster observed: "My connection with India is peculiar and personal. It started because I made friends with an Indian, and but for him I might never have gone to his country, or written about it.... It is on this basis of personal relationship that my connection with that strange country rests. I didn't go there to govern it or to improve people. I went there to see a friend."<sup>7</sup> In an earlier piece written for an Urdu journal as a memorial tribute on Masood's death in 1937, Forster wrote: "My own debt to him is incalculable. He woke me up out of my suburban and academic life, showed me new horizons and a new civilization, and helped me towards the understanding of a continent. Until I met him, India was a vague jumble of rajahs, sahibs, babus and elephants, and I was not interested in such a jumble; who could be? He made everything real and exciting as soon as he began to talk, and seventeen years later when I wrote *A Passage to India* I dedicated it to him out of gratitude as well as out of love, for it would never had been written without him," (TCD, "Syed Ross Masood," p. 285). Certainly Forster's love for Masood was an inspiration for the novel—and for the attempt to make of it something more than an unexamined Orientalist "jumble"—but is that love actually what the novel is about in

<sup>7</sup> "Three Countries," in (HD, p. 296). The MS continues on p. 12, "...and to make more friends." No mention of the discrepancy is made in the Textual Notes (HD, p. 398); the omission of this last rather interesting phrase seems to have been an oversight.

some way? Or is love sublimated into some theme of a more overtly political flavor? And is there evidence in the rhetorical structure of the text for this sublimation? The simplest answer to each of these questions is, No. In fact, there seems to be evidence of a different sort in the newly surfaced letters from Forster to Masood from both periods of the composition of the novel, that Forster quickly lost faith—not so much in love, as in its applicability or translatability into a political vision or a rhetorical device; that he lost faith, in other words, in the inheritance of sentimental and realist rhetoric in a modern social and political context. Furthermore, instead of substituting an alternate faith in something other than love—fear, nationalism, race, whatever—he created a texture highlighting the absence and ineffectuality of love despite its desirability as a paradigm. That this evidence is found in the letters even from the height of his love for Masood and the genesis of *A Passage to India* indicates the subtlety of the emotional, political, and rhetorical intersections at the heart of the novel.

Forster corresponded consistently with Masood from the start of their friendship in November 1906 until Masood's death on 30 July 1937. Many of these letters have been known and quoted for some time, although most were left out of Mary Lago and P. N. Furbank's two volume selection of 1985. Some were transcribed in a book of very limited circulation (500 copies) published in 1984 by the Ross Masood Education and Culture Society of Pakistan, edited by Jalil Ahmad Kidwai, but again, there were conspicuous vacancies. In 1993, however, many other letters which had been in Pakistan were released to auction by members of Masood's surviving family. Most of these were bought by King's College Modern Archives and have now been catalogued. In some of these newly surfaced letters, there are particularly rich comments pertinent to the issues of this thesis from the two periods spanning the composition of the novel, from July 1913 through mid-August 1914 and again from April 1922 through January 1924.<sup>8</sup> These new letters give clues to how Forster's personal involvement with Masood came to be translated into an interest in India in general and in the cultural involvement of England with India. Also, they speak to some of the influences on

<sup>8</sup> The first period of composition can be dated because of the egregiously green ink Forster used in the first drafts of the early chapters: his "Locked Diary" also contains three entries in the same green ink, from July 1913. The second period of composition can be inferred from a comment in Forster's other diary, in which he records on 12 April 1922 the encouragement of Leonard Woolf to look back over his "Indian fragment with a view to continuing it." The completion of the novel can be dated from a letter from Forster to Woolf, 22 Jan 1924: "I have this moment written the last words of my novel and who but Virginia and you should be told about it first?" See also Stallybrass, Editor's Introductions to (PI, pp. xi-xv), and to *The Manuscripts of PI* (1979); Harrison (1965); and Thomson (1967), Appendix B, pp. 261-272.

Forster as he conceived and planned *A Passage to India*: why he stopped writing the first draft, why he eventually started again, and the rhetorical and architectural changes which the novel underwent as a result.<sup>9</sup> And almost in passing, the letters indicate the great distance Forster stood from any determining Liberal or Orientalist sublime—his tone is often one of avowedly resisting these very tendencies in himself and in his culture and society, and of conceiving his novel in terms to resist them as well. Most generally, these letters show how Forster's novel helps provide the link between the development of modernism and the development of postcolonialism; he and his work stand in crucial relationship to those literary and cultural ideals, representing the extent to which each ideal is unachievable in practice, and how to accommodate such an awareness productively.

Before looking at the letters, though, it is worth noting that some of Forster's later writings also take up the question of whether a personal desire can be translated into a social vision, or whether human emotions can ever be models for political positions. These are less specifically concerned with how such questions connect to the writing of novels, but looking at certain passages here reveals how many of Forster's ideas eventually took shape after the early experimentation in the drafts of *A Passage to India*. The famous essay of 1938, "What I Believe," (TCD, p. 71) contains the sentiment that earthly life may be a tragedy, if not a failure, because "no device has been found by which these private decencies ["the holiness of the Heart's affections"] can be transmitted to public affairs." The 1946 essay "India Again," in (TCD, p. 323) ends a discussion of the mood of Indian politics on the eve of Independence and Partition with this: "The only thing that cuts a little ice is affection or the possibility of affection.... But it must be genuine affection and liking. It must not be exercised with any ulterior motive. It must be an expression of the common humanity which in India and England and all the world over has been so thwarted of late, and so despised." Certainly the sweep of mood in *The Hill of Devi* (1953)—whose chapters begin with "The State and its Ruler" and end in "Catastrophe"—is indicative of these ideas; Forster's exploration of his friendship with the Maharajah of Dewas Senior portrays that kingdom's downfall as largely conditioned by its ruler's tendency to regard politics as an extension of his

<sup>9</sup> These questions have been explored in great detail by Stallybrass in his introduction to (PI, pp vii-xxviii), and by Heine in her introduction to *Arctic Summer* (1980), pp. vii-xxxv—the novel Forster began and abandoned after writing *Howards End* and before the First World War. Both introductions look at diaries, letters, and drafts of the novels in the context of Forster's personal reactions to various events in his life. In what follows I have looked at new letters, and tried to direct my observations toward an approach to the texts less psychological than rhetorical.

personal affairs and his spiritual quest for love and friendship. In his 1941 essay "Tolerance" Forster posits a specifically unsentimental tolerance of others as the basic foundation for the reconstruction of the postwar world and the only, distant possibility by which love, "the greatest force in our private lives[,] might also rule in public life," (TCD, p. 46). What he says here can be easily translated to refer to a postcolonial world: "I don't regard tolerance as a great eternally established divine principle.... It is just a makeshift, suitable for an overcrowded and overheated planet. It carries on when love gives out, and love generally gives out as soon as we move away from our home and our friends, and stand among strangers. [Tolerance] is wanted above all between classes, races and nations. It's dull. And yet it entails imagination. For you have all the time to be putting yourself in someone else's place. Which is a desirable spiritual exercise," (TCD, p. 45). Perhaps the most direct statement on these issues is an unpublished paper called "Three Generations". This was written in 1937, the year Masood died, for a meeting of the Cambridge Majlis,<sup>10</sup> and is interesting because of its intimate and specifically Indian context:

At the beginning of the century [personal relationships] were exalted into something political, and it was felt that if they were solved the problems of civilisation would be solved too. Liberalism exalts the individual—that is why it appeals to me—and the liberalism of those days hoped that by exalting the individual the community would be benefited. There is something in this, but not as much as we hoped. I remember so well on my first visit to India in 1912, when I thought that if the English would only behave more politely to the Indians, the difficulties between the races would be solved.<sup>11</sup> Good manners were to do the trick. I see now how superficial my conclusion was; I was completely ignoring the economic factor for instance. But my mistake is typical of the period.<sup>12</sup> We deified personal relationships and expected them to function outside their appropriate sphere. By this time I was writing novels and I remember a sentence in one of them: personal relationships are the only thing that matter, for ever and ever. I still believe this as regards the spiritual life. My own relations with people have brought me the only happiness I have found worth having or recommending—not a flash-in-the-pan happiness either, solid achievement. What about the community though? Will it benefit? Not necessarily, and people who feel as I do, and place the individual first, are not always good citizens and are never good party men. Our early training has been too strong for us.

<sup>10</sup> AMs in King's Modern Archives.

<sup>11</sup> Fielding comments in the last chapter of (PI, p. 311): "The British Empire really can't be abolished because it's rude." See also Forster, "Reflections in India I: Too Late?", *Nation & Athenaeum*, 21 Jan 1922, pp. 614-5: "the great blunder of the past is neither political nor economic nor educational, but social; . . . [having to do with] rudeness in railway carriages." Note that this is cited in Trivedi (1993), p. 182-3, as an example of Forster's "marginalization, indeed minimalization, of [the politics of the Raj] in his novel"—but Trivedi seems to miss Forster's own strong pessimism about such an understanding of British/Indian relations.

<sup>12</sup> Compare Annan (1990), pp. 28-30, of L.S. Woolf: "Since like Russell he ignored sociology and wrote as if Spencer, Marx, Weber, and Durkheim had never existed, his masterpieces fell dead from the press."



What these citations reveal is that Forster's much vaunted faith in personal relations is not as simple or embarrassing as is often assumed—even given such notorious statements as “If I had to choose between betraying my country and betraying my friend I hope I should have the guts to betray my country,” (TCD, “What I Believe,” p. 66). As much as he might value love and friendship, he knew well that they could not function politically in the present and intolerant world, nor be models for the political and social change he most desired for the postwar and postcolonial worlds. But love and friendship allowed him access to a vision of such worlds, “the sense of a world that asks to be noticed rather than explained,” (TCD, “The Last of Abinger,” p. 357)—and “noticed” not in specific political detail, but according to its possibilities, as a vision worth fighting for and worth writing for. Love and friendship are not the mechanisms of change, rather in their very deferrals they constitute the encouragement to develop such mechanisms out of other materials at hand in all their infinite variety. His words on the poet Iqbal from an essay of the same year, 1946, capture the idea succinctly and describe Forster's own position well: “He believed in the Self—the Self as a fighting unit—and his philosophy is not an inquiry into truth but a recommendation as to how the fight should be carried on.... It is weakening and wrong to seek union with the Divine. Vision—perhaps. Union—no.” Furthermore, though this is not a philosophy Forster likes, he recognizes that “it inspires [Iqbal] to write poems,” (TCD, “Muhammed Iqbal,” pp. 282-284). Forster's version of union with the Divine, his truth, is love. But he knows it is weakening to live solely by this dogma—it is possible, maybe even essential, to write by it, but not to live by it.<sup>13</sup> Thus love and friendship must be mixed with tolerance for a world in which “one nation is mixed up with another,” (TCD, “Tolerance,” p. 45); and they must no longer be the materials out of which a social vision, even in the form of the novel, is expressed. Instead they should be replaced with a rhetoric which calls specific attention to their absence and dispersal, and in doing so generates a desire to attain to them again in an unknowable future.

The letters to Masood, even from the earliest period of Forster's conception of *A Passage to India*, evince the germs of these same ideas, and specifically attach them to the process of the composition of the novel. Perhaps the most startlingly relevant comment in these newly surfaced letters comes in one written from Weybridge on 20 May 1913. According to the basic theory of the genesis of *Passage*, this letter would

<sup>13</sup> On the notion of the amateur, see Forster, “The Raison d’Etre of Criticism,” (TCD, pp. 105-118), and also Said (1994).



predate Forster's first attempts at composition by somewhat more than a month. Yet in it he indicates that he is already considering the possibility of a novel, even if his creativity is blocked to some extent by an issue which will eventually form part of the core of the finished text, namely a frustrated desire for intimacy between individuals of the two cultures: "I don't know if I shall ever be able to write about India—when I begin I seem to dislike you all equally." This vexation of trying to express an individual desire (his love for Masood) as a social desire for community (a non-dominative relationship between England and India) is also combined with a suspicion of the very possibility of community. But trying to write about community seems to shut down the inspiration to write about community, the motivating sentiment, the desire. Does this blockage emanate from some Liberal Orientalist sublime which Forster has imbibed? The language indicates otherwise, emphasizing illusory appearance over incontrovertible actuality: "I *seem* to dislike you" rather than "I actually do." Forster is aware that a real prejudice of this sort might well be silencing, and that it is therefore something to be aware of and to resist. In other words: "I love Masood, I love his culture and compatriots; but when I try to write about them, my inherited Orientalism *seems* to transform my love to dislike." The challenge is to resist this tendency—or in the vocabulary of the theoretical explorations drawn from Said and music, one wants in some way to *transgress* upon the Liberal Orientalist sublime to subvert its incipient dominance. In this early letter Forster is already aware of this challenge; in later letters, diary entries, and various experiments with the text itself we can see him rising to the challenge and developing strategies for overcoming it.

In a sense, the text of the novel itself is generated by this challenge to transgress upon the cultural expectations for an English novel of India. Forster capitalizes first upon his transgressive homosexual love for Masood, and eventually upon his almost heretical vision of a non-imperial community of Indian and British cultures; in between the two stages he separates himself from some of the conventions of the English novel form which he had adhered to previously, and aligns his text with some of the developing tenets of contemporary modernism; he does this in such a way as suggests some of the later positions of postcolonialism when he then comments of India, "But it is certainly waiting for a great novelist. Produce one yourselves."<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup> See "Modern Indian Novelists": "I feel these novels are important—partly because of their merits, partly because they are a means of intercourse between East and West." Also, "Turning Over a New Leaf: Indian Novelists Writing in English," Broadcast 9 Jun 1941. On Forster's broadcasts to India 1930-1960, see Colmer (1975), pp. 193-218, Das (1977), Arlott in Stallybrass (1969), and especially

Forster is at the time of this letter, and before even drafting a word of the novel, not yet confident of being able to achieve such resistance or transgression, or beyond that the expression of a novel. He intimates that the pressure upon him—the cultural and attitudinal stream he is swimming against in conceiving the English novel so differently—is vast. Also the comment on India producing its own great novelist points to the classic dilemma of alternative theoretical formulations: can a man be a feminist, can an Englishman represent India, can Forster even begin to prefigure postcolonialism? Yes—the point is not who is writing but what is written. Embedded within the aboriginal moment of Forster's identity and self-awareness as an English Indian novelist, is a strong suspicion that an English Indian novel must be written from slightly outside English fictional structures and inheritances and from slightly inside Indian ones. This is not to say, necessarily, that *only* an Indian can write an Indian novel—that would enforce a notion of sublime incommunicability between races. Rather it is to say that neither India nor England must be the generating influence on the text—what is crucial is the relationship of the two cultures to each other, the communities they can constitute, the processes of their communication. Forster's novel is not an Indian novel; it is an English Indian novel, still enmeshed in the colonial connections between India and England—and what is most important is that it is born of the desire, significantly frustrated, to be no longer so enmeshed and to move past the preconceptions and prejudices of colonialism to whatever indefinable aspect will develop beyond it.

Thus two things stand out in this letter, and connect Forster's thinking about two cultures with the early conception of *A Passage to India*: the issue of frustrated desire, and the issue of a precursive endorsement of the postcolonial position by which the Indian novel is no longer translated from the structures and frustrations of English fiction. This will open the text to the influence of certain modernist innovations, and it will also lead to the text itself constituting an innovation for the role of the novel form in anglophone culture.

Forster wrote this 20 May letter shortly after returning from his first visit to India in 1912-1913. Before embarking on this trip he wrote to Masood from Dorking, 19 August 1912: "I can't describe how much I long to see you again. You have made me half an Oriental, and my soul is in the East before my body reaches it. I don't *understand* the East or expect to understand it, but I've learnt to love it for several years

---

Lago (1995), ch. 4, pp. 92-130. Professor Lago intends eventually to transcribe and edit for publication the available broadcast scripts.

now.”<sup>15</sup> Again, the words call attention to Forster’s individual and transgressive love for Masood—although here, in the excitement of an immanent journey and reunion, he is less suspicious of translating such a local desire into a general social vision and makes the extrapolation easily. Significantly, though, this social vision is not predicated upon an Orientalist pursuit knowledge—a species of “understanding” which Said in *Orientalism* and others elsewhere have demonstrated can amount to an urge to acquire and to dominate.<sup>16</sup> Forster, in other words, is neither interested in nor expecting to interpret the East according to his own inescapable Western paradigms. He is not interested in transplanting his Western sensibility, nor even his body as a Western body, to an Eastern geography. He operates for love, rather than according to a desire for power. In and of itself this somewhat subverts the Orientalist paradigm, and opens him up to a more vital experience of and communication with another culture.<sup>17</sup> Also there is in his words a subtle dissatisfaction with the implied cliché of the correspondence between East and soul, West and body: the phrase “My soul is in the East before my body reaches it” implies that within Forster’s physical, clearly erotic desire to be one with Masood is also entrenched a desire to be no longer dismembered and bisected by colonialism. Forster who has helped Westernize Masood by teaching him Latin has been similarly “made half an Oriental” by his friend—if anything, the Englishman has been colonized by the Indian, or they have met half-way. In any case the yearning is for unity, and beyond that for community.

Most significant is the predication of Forster’s original interest in India upon physical and emotional desires; again, these are significantly frustrated and even more significantly transgressive, and present themselves within the larger condition of an interpenetrating perspective and within the polyphonic complementarity of East and West. The Orientalist notion that never those twain shall meet is entirely absent here, and Forster’s rhetoric works deliberately against it at the subtlest levels.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Compare 13 August 1942 broadcast, “My Debt to India”: “I am not so foolish as to say that I understand your country. But I have good grounds for saying that I love it.”

<sup>16</sup> A few studies, out of many more possible examples, of the imperial will-to-power operating through culture, in chronological order: James (1938); Eric Williams (1944); Schwab (1950); Panikkar (1959); Thornton (1966); Fanon (1967); Parry (1972); Headrick (1981); Miller (1985); Mackenzie (1986); Brantlinger (1988); Adas (1989); Viswanathan (1989); Cheyfitz (1991); Lowe (1991); Perera (1991); Majeed (1992).

<sup>17</sup> Compare Nandy (1983), p. 107, which also speaks to this idea and echoes Forster’s characterization of himself as “half and Oriental”: “Probably, the culture itself demands that a certain permeability of boundaries be maintained in one’s self-image and that the self be not defined too tightly or separated too mechanically from the not-self.”

<sup>18</sup> See Suleri (1991), ch. 6, “Forster’s Imperial Erotic,” which reads the incident in which Aziz gives Fielding his collar stud as an analog of homosexual coitus. See also a letter from after Forster’s Indian

Forster's self-consciousness about his rhetoric continues to be obvious in a poignantly droll but useful letter from after the India trip. He writes on 12 July 1913 in response to the announcement of Masood's engagement. He is "moved" by the news—which must be distressing to him—to quote Persian poetry. The choice of verse is symptomatic: it is a brief dialogue which implies Forster's deep attachment to Masood while not being remotely envious, and which achieves such equanimity through a vision of unity—unity of lover and beloved, as well as unity of "beauty," "mirror," and "eyes". These three images are metaphors for artistry, representation, and perception; they can be construed not as the West perceiving, representing and aestheticizing the East according to some Orientalist paradigm but as a vision of consummated homosexual desire couched as an essentially transgressive polyphonic utopia:

Said I "To whom belongs thy beauty?" He  
 Replied, "Since I alone exist, to Me.  
 Lover, Beloved, and Love am I in one  
 Beauty, and Mirror, and the eyes which see."

Forster follows this citation with his usual valediction, "Thine forever, Morgan," and then an intriguing post scriptum where his rhetorical sensitivity is demonstrated, along with an example of rhetorical polyphony, in which two intonations are "mingled":

Prose—If you really are rich, pay me the six pounds the three shillings and the three pennies that I paid your tailor in January.  
 Sentiment again—My mother sends you her love and best wishes for your happiness.  
 Mingled Prose and Sentiment—Have just been to call on Mrs. M who has a far higher opinion of you than I have. If I had her exalted views I should never dream of being your friend.

This Austenesque irony, while self-conscious and probably employed to mask his certain disappointment over Masood's coming marriage, is noteworthy for its ability to communicate an otherwise utterly sublimated sexual desire, now eternally deferred. The rhetorical polyphony, which Forster calls explicit attention to in the word "mingled"—together with the flagrantly sentimental, ostensibly Orientalist, but ultimately quite subtle Persian citation it follows—contributes to an implicit agenda of

---

journey, 15 August 1913, which predicates an interest in India upon individual desire (although here not interracial), and even contains what may be the germ of Adela Quested in *Passage*: "I am well, but feeling awfully cut off from India which chiefly owing to your damned self has become a part of my life. I meet no one who is interested in it, or cares to talk to me. True, a young lady came to dinner last night who is going for winter to Lahore, but the only point that interested her is whether she should have a pad under her saddle, and if so whether the pad should be bought in India or here. She was not a very giving lady, and probably a husband is her real 'call of the east,' but she did not mention that."



stating the unstatable. In this case, the love which dares not speak its name finds expression through this wordplay, much as Oscar Wilde's actual "style" had served to convey an inexpressible "sincerity".<sup>19</sup>

Forster's sophistication at manipulating sentimental rhetoric is significant for more than its own sake; the letters in which his skill is most at play coincide with the early period of the composition of *A Passage to India*, and it would seem that Forster was at this time very self-conscious, as a writer, of the writerly business of using words to achieve effects. It is also interesting to see that after he abandoned work on this early draft of the novel, and then picked it up again some 8 years later, his self-consciousness had turned directly away from this sort of rhetorical gamesmanship, specifically away from the strategies of indirection and irony and the suspicions of the power of words to convey emotions with sufficient resonance—he continued to employ such devices, but in a less mannered fashion and for different reasons. It is as if the priorities in the conception of the novel were reversed: in the earlier phases individual desire developed into a social allegory, in the later ones a social vision was couched in terms of the frustration of individual desire. Part of the reason for the change was a growing suspicion of personal relations as the basis for any community between English and Indian cultures—(and of course this may have reflected the subsiding of his emotional and sexual frustrations over Masood.)

In a letter from the earlier period, 8 August 1913, we see how Forster's perception of himself as a writer has parallels in his perception of India in general: he reports that he has "been reading Monier Williams—the first possible book on Hinduism that I have struck,"<sup>20</sup> and furthermore that "H'ism is very interesting . . . more so than either Mohammedanism or Christianity." Not the least important aspect of this letter is the evidence it provides for why Forster, in love with the Muslim Masood, had such a greater interest in Hinduism and why *A Passage to India* is shaped accordingly. But also in the letter Forster represents the essentially polyphonic texture of the religious structure of India, which can explode into conflict whenever a polyvocal understanding is supplanted with a sectarian one. Replicating this general pattern at the level of one specific religion, Forster states that what makes Hinduism more vital for him is a matter of its being "intertwined in the life of those whose profess it," as opposed to being dogmatically imposed like Islam; Hinduism, as he sees it, itself represents a species of

<sup>19</sup> Wilde (1992), Act III, scene 1: Gwedolyn says, "In matters of importance, style not sincerity is the vital thing."

<sup>20</sup> Monier-Williams (1863, 1875, 1878, 1883, 1887, 1964).



polyphony, whereas Islam is monophonic, authoritative. This suspicion of domination, intriguingly, is expressed as a suspicion of written language: "Religions of the book' must always retain something of the book," and Forster goes on to state how he feels vitality is squelched by dogma, by language: "though their adherents may pretend to have life on them, they don't really." Life is in the intertwining, the polyphony. Also, Forster seems to be transgressing even against his relationship with Masood by valorizing the alternative religion—he is not so obsessed with Masood that he cannot regard India objectively, and form independent opinions about things. This delicate resistance to the tendency of even love to reify helps translate Forster's individual desire into a more general social vision. And again, Forster employs a deeply layered strategy for preserving the vitality of his desire while never expressing it in direct language, and for perpetuating his suspicions of direct language in general.

Most of these ideas converge in a letter from a few months later, 20 November 1913:

I have been at Cambridge for a week with Dickinson and heard him read part of his A. K. report: it contains a most interesting comparison between India and China, and works out his theory that the Western world and China are intellectually nearer to one another than either is to India. I believe there is something in it. My own feeling for India and for what I conceive to be the Indian character is purely emotional, and as soon as I try to justify it in words, I fail. No doubt it is ridiculous to have fallen in love with a continent of 60,000,000 people, but apparently this is what I've done, and no doubt my emotion will seem ridiculous and worthless to the Indians themselves. However there it is. They may not respect it but they must accept it.

Again, there is the suspicion of the direct expression of sentiment, of "words" used to justify a "purely emotional" conception. Also present is the sublimation of the love for Masood into a social context—this is achieved merely by inflation: 1 becomes 60,000,000 (a number, not a word, not "sixty million"), Masood becomes vividly plural, the individual becomes incontrovertibly social by expanding in number.

Forster is at once sheepish and brisk about having "fallen in love with a continent": "apparently this is what I have done.... However there it is." Oddly though, there is a new note creeping in here. The tone with which Forster insists that his love will itself constitute a new politics for the relationship between India and England has the ring of suspiciously familiar imperialism: as it were, "They may not respect us but here we are and they had better accept it because this is the white man's burden and there is no ignoring it."<sup>21</sup> Is Forster here being as begrudgingly paternalistic as Kipling or John

<sup>21</sup> Perhaps this is influenced in some degree by Forster's immediately prior exposure to Dickinson's general distaste for Indian culture. The Alfred Kahn report on his travels in Asia was submitted to the foundation which financed his trip, and was published initially as "Essays on the Civilisations of India,

Masters? Perhaps not: rather than an incipient endorsement of the Liberal Orientalist sublime, this can be read as a growing dissatisfaction with the rhetoric of sentimental fiction: in personal terms, one senses Forster's loss of confidence, or interest even, in his love for Masood and all other Indians—indeed, he protests too much for those 60,000,000—and in rhetorical terms, one senses disaffection with the role love and sentiment might play, when extrapolated to a social level, in the conception of the relationship between India and England. The love for Masood, diminishing as even the strongest of such attachments will when unencouraged (except in the decidedly non-modernist novels of Barbara Pym and the like) no longer need be sublimated into a social vision of a community of cultures. But as the desire dies, the social vision remains; as the sentimental rhetoric dissipates an element of the rhetoric of modernist despair creeps in. This forms the basis of the utopian postcolonial vision of the novel—its sense of deferred desire for cultural community.<sup>22</sup>

There is further evidence in a letter of 2 May 1920 of Forster's lingering frustration with the sentimental tradition of the English novel and his own inability to work within the genre: "I have never been more in the writing world and never less deserved to be in it, for I produce nothing that has permanence or value. Would that I could turn out long novels, as formerly."<sup>23</sup> In place of his own attempts, he nominates as "the best

---

China, and Japan" and later as *Appearances* (both 1914). It conveys the actual fear and discomfort Dickinson felt while in India, the corresponding relief once he got to China, and his sense that the logic, culture, and politics of Confucianism were akin to Europe's intellectual inheritance from classical Greece. See also Dickinson (1904), chapter 11 on India and China, pp. 104-128; and Forster's introduction to his *Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson* (1973), pp. 216-217. See also Forster's letters and diaries from the period of their travels together in India [published in (HD, pp. 115-228)], and Furbank's version of the events (Furbank, p. 222i) which show Dickinson, at times if not always, behaving in a rather conventionally Orientalist or imperialist manner.

<sup>22</sup> There are also, of course, more psychological and sexual reasons for Forster's changing sense of self and corresponding changes in the conception of *Passage*. Shortly after his return from India Forster met the sexual emancipator Edward Carpenter, was touched on the buttocks by Carpenter's lover George Merrill, and felt the sensation "go straight through the small of [his] back into [his] ideas." [See also the essay "Edward Carpenter," 1944, in (TCD, pp. 205-7).] This was the moment, as described in the "Terminal Note" to *Maurice*, of the conception of that novel about fulfilled, satisfying, and directly expressed homosexual love, [see Furbank, p. 257i, and *Maurice* (1971)]. Forster's writing about India in this period quickly became confined to essays, articles, and travelogues for the *New Weekly*, [see, for example, the several pieces collected together in AH under the section "Adrift in India," and the articles on Indian themes in TCD and AE.] By the time the war began in the middle of 1914, Forster stopped writing imaginatively for the rest of the War.

<sup>23</sup> After *A Passage to India* Forster never even attempted another novel. His disaffection with the genre continued for the rest of his life, and tended to reflect his perception of the social world as something no longer to be apprehended within the rhetorical conventions of fiction. (On the changing sequence of genre in Forster's oeuvre, see Lago (1995), which is organized around this issue.) In 1959, 40 years after the letters to Masood expressing some of his earliest reservations, Forster commented in "Three Countries", p. 9: "I couldn't write an English novel now: the prospect for all countries is too dubious and too complicated." In 1937 he wrote in "Three Generations": "I very much doubt whether

novel that has in [his] opinions been written about the East": a work which eludes classification, *Le Livre de Goha le Simple*, written in French by two Alexandrine Greek Jews Albert Adès and Albert Josipovici, and published in Paris in 1919. This is an odd choice; it is a work of High Orientalism, a *verismo* portrait of 18th century Cairo as overwrought as Forster's own description of it in his later article "Salute to the Orient!" of 1923: "The housetop where the lovers unite becomes indescribably beautiful, and the falling stars above the Mocattam Hills are really the blocks of fire that the angels are throwing on to the jinns lest they climb up into heaven," (AH, p. 285). Forster's ability to manipulate the rhetoric of the sentimental and of love with any subtlety has now decayed completely—the lapse in taste in endorsing this novel can also be seen as a lapse in cultural respect, and this farrago of Orientalist imagery is indicative of an awkward collapse in discourse. Forster, whom we think of as sensitive and subtle, is here clumsy and heavy-handed; even his trademark evasiveness, his reluctance to employ direct language, his predilection for allusive, impressionistic rhetoric over blunt realism is contravened when he plows as stolidly as Bulwer-Lytton into a description of an "indescribably beautiful" scene. The rhetoric of sentimental realism has played itself out for him, and even the emphatic endorsement he gives to an extreme expression of this rhetoric is an ironical, if unintentional, indication of his bankruptcy.

It is interesting in this light to see how he ends the letter to Masood in which he has recommended *Goha le Simple*: "I am awfully cut off now from things Oriental. When I meet Egyptians or Indians now they do not seem to trust me. I am not surprised. I expect never to make any *new* Oriental friends now." He represents a situation in which he is read by the East, in which Egyptians and Indian sense in him a change—not of perception, because he has not become prejudiced against them, but rather of expression, because he has lost his ability to express his increasingly alienated perceptions. Whereas before he had been able to detect and express subtle sensitivities available to him because he was not constrained by Orientalist prejudices, recently he has lost control over that power of expression and his perceptions seem correspondingly dulled, or distracted, or even corrupted. It is no wonder that he is

---

the particular form of literature which has interested me, namely the novel, is likely to survive. The novel has always been the stronghold of individualism: it expresses the writer's outlook, it deals with characters and the relations between them, it makes a great fuss over love affairs and sordid nuances. I don't think people will have the patience to write that sort of thing anymore, even if they have the time." See also "Modern Writing": "Bereft of its stock in trade the novel will develop in two directions (i) it will begin to mirror society and to interpret it for the people—an old aim, but society is now so large and chaotic and its 'people' now so numerous that the results in fiction will be new. (ii) it will tend toward poetry[:] it will become more like song...."

unable to make any "new" Oriental friends in such a time, or that the old ones should lose their trust in him. Clearly, writing of such matters to Masood in India is an attempt, either subconscious or deliberate, to overcome this blockage, to be reassured of the trust of at least one "Oriental" friend, and to see that he still has something of subtlety to say to the East and of his relationship to the East.

However, this situation does not last for long. Exactly two weeks later Forster writes again to Masood on 16 May 1920, in another letter which indicates his having reached out to his friend for reassurance about his powers of expression. It seems Forster had earlier sent a draft of what would eventually become the "Mosque" section of *A Passage to India* to Masood (the material written in 1913 and 1914). Here again, he offers himself up to be read; the draft is well received, and the experience makes Forster feel better: "I can't tell you how pleased I am by your approval of 'The Mosque'." This continues in a vein now familiar from his earlier disquisition on Hinduism: "Despite its purity—perhaps because of its purity!—your religion has never attracted me greatly, yet I have always longed so much to put myself in the position of a Mohammedan and to imagine how his religion and his religious architecture appealed to him, and your letter suggests that I have succeeded a little." In this Forster seems no longer "cut off from things Oriental," and instead figures himself as a Muslim, in a Muslim environment, having Muslim feelings. That this translation of self is available to him again suggests a return to the more imaginatively creative Forster, but the rhetoric of the sentimental is decidedly changed, more empathetic rather than merely evocative. After the heavy descent into Orientalism and the abuses of perception and expression which that had entailed in his reading of *Goha le Simple*, his diction moves toward the more deliberately and subtly ironic rhetoric of empathy and desire in *A Passage to India*.

This can be mistaken for an aspect of the Liberal Orientalist sublime, but need not be. That Forster has no fear of being left voiceless by his contact with India is confirmed in a letter to Masood from a year later, 25 and 26 May 1921: Forster writes from his position as Private Secretary to the Maharajah of Dewas State Senior, that "It is not the barrier of language that divides me from certain aspects of your compatriots. The obstacles are purely moral or architectural." From the letter of a year prior, we know that Forster at that time felt satisfied with his own experiments for overcoming these moral and architectural obstacles. With the language barrier being immaterial and the moral and architectural barriers being surmountable, Forster in this later letter seems to announce, or at least prefigure, his eventual return to fluency and confidence. Out of



this new voice, and under the influence of various other intervening factors, he will produce *A Passage to India*.

Forster states in his diary entry for 12 April 1922 his intentions of returning, with Leonard Woolf's encouragement, to the early drafts of his Indian novel.<sup>24</sup> Again, there is interest in the architectural sensitivity—"Must try to recover my dormant sense of space"—but more immediately obvious is the implication that Forster is now equipped to deal with the challenge of writing this particular novel because of a change in his own personal sentimentalism, which will contribute to a decreased dependence on rhetorical sentimentalism:<sup>25</sup>

At Leonard's advice have read my Indian fragment with a view to continuing it. Then [in 1913] I trusted people more, and was slower to impute cynicism. My practical experiences at Dewas have made me both cuter and stupider. I no longer make the emotional appeal that is necessary to call out the best from an oriental, real or imaginary. The philosophic scheme of the fragment still suits me. Must try to recover my dormant sense of space. Earthy self-consciousness.

A similar note is struck in the last of the newly surfaced letters to Masood from this period, which is also one of the most revealing. Three days later on 15 April 1922 Forster wrote that the causes of his sterility had been "diffidence", which one can also take to mean his rhetorical evasions and indirections, his reluctance to confront any given act of expression explicitly; and "sensitivity", which one can also take to mean the dependence upon emotional sensation and sentiment as prerequisite compositional modes. Having abandoned such things, he feels his writing begin to flow again: "I think I am shaking off the diffidence that is such a bore to myself and my friends and such a provocation to any ill-natured acquaintance or stranger. It is awful to be so sensitive—or rather to register the world as a series of kind- or unkindnesses; you learn no more about it that way than if you were obtuse, and it is one of the things that has been hanging up my writing."<sup>26</sup> It is suddenly easier to see how he could have identified so readily with the obtuse imbecile of *Goha le Simple*: he feels as if his

<sup>24</sup> See also Stape, ed. (1993), p. 58: "It is possible that without the restraining influence of Leonard [Woolf], the immanent spirit of the Marabar Caves might have become an overt presence disastrous to the credibility of *A Passage to India*, which I regard as the finest of his books, and which had a great political influence."

<sup>25</sup> This was not an immediate and complete change, and in fact the novel continued through its completion to be very difficult for Forster to write. Almost a year after returning to his first drafts, when he was well launched on the new ones, he wrote to the Woolfs of his persistent sense of working with exhausted rhetorical materials, 30 April 1923: "Thanks to Virginia and you, the novel will get finished, though it seems more old fashioned than ever this morning."

<sup>26</sup> Compare "My Books and I", p. 70: "With such a capacity for being wounded in his most private parts, I find it natural that a writer should act the mystery man, and I approve of the devices of Conrad, for example, though Conrad finds it easier than I because he despises his fellow creatures."



perceptions have been limited to the extent that he never noticed the ineffectuality of his world view, his unjustifiable faith in the kindness of strangers. Neither did he notice his own increasing suspicion of a rhetoric oriented to kindness and love—a rhetoric which “registered the world as a series of kind- or unkindnesses.” Such a perception had become insufficient for the world as he had come to live in it, such an expression and such a rhetoric equally insufficient. Clinging to diffidence and sensitivity were “hanging up” his writing; shaking them off helped him find a new voice. Within a month the novel was growing rapidly, and on 27 September 1922 Forster again wrote to Masood in the same vein:

When I began the book I thought of it as a little bridge of sympathy between East and West, but this conception has had to go, my sense of truth forbids anything so comfortable. I think that most Indians, like most English people, are shits, and I am not interested whether they sympathize with one another or not. Not interested as an artist; of course the journalistic side of me still gets roused over these questions....<sup>27</sup>

He has recovered his artistic discernment, and basing it on a much firmer emotional and literary rhetoric—a sense of truth, and the instinct to use un-“comfortable” words—has begun the process of revivifying the Indian fragment from eight years prior. Characterizing the new mood of the text—less sentimental, tending more toward the mystical—Forster commented in 1959 in “Three Countries,” (in HD, p. 298): “The book is not really about politics, though it is the political aspect of it that caught the general public and made it sell. It’s about something wider than politics, about the search of the human race for a more abiding home, about the universe as embodied in the Indian earth and the Indian sky, about the horror lurking in the Marabar Caves and the release symbolized by the birth of Krishna. It is—or rather desires to be—philosophic and poetic....”

<sup>27</sup> This is not one of the newly surfaced letters; it has been in the collection at King’s for some years and is listed in Lago (1985). The same passage is also quoted in Stallybrass, Introduction to (PI, p. xv). On the subject of the “journalistic” and political dimension of PI, Forster claimed in a letter to his publisher Edward Arnold, 8 June 1924, that he had “been careful not to allude to contemporary politics,” though he clearly could not resist the temptation at times; veiled though the allusions may be, they are there. These allusions, furthermore, helped boost sales of the novel when its first appearance coincided with the libel action brought against Sir Michael O’Dwyer, General Reginald Dyer’s superior as Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab in 1919 during the massacre at Amritsar. See Stallybrass, Introduction to (PI, p. xxii). Here also (PI, pp. xxii-xxiii) is a history of various political interpretations of the novel. See as well (HD, p. 101); Reading (1924), p. 10; “A.S.B.” (1928), p. 590; Chaudhuri (1954); Scott (1966), p. 15: the novel gave to the nationalist cause “vivid dramatic evidence to justify the direction of a swing that had already begun. It helped the swing to gather momentum.”

Of course, in the intervening years, much else of significance occurred. Forster had further exposure to India in Dewas (1921).<sup>28</sup> Also his time spent in Egypt (1915-1919) was transformative.<sup>29</sup> He consummated a homosexual relationship with Muhammed el-Adl in Alexandria,<sup>30</sup> and engaged in writing explicitly homosexual fiction: *Maurice*, several of the stories now collected in *The Life to Come*. The First World War occurred, as well as various political imperial crises in Ireland and India: the 1916 Easter Rebellion in Dublin and the massacre at Amritsar in 1919.<sup>31</sup> Maynard Keynes changed the structure of European and global capitalism with *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* in 1919. Various landmarks of High Modernism and other revisionary works appeared in the literary world: Eliot's "Prufrock" in 1917 and "The Waste Land" in 1922, Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* in 1916 and *Ulysses* in 1922, Lytton Strachey's *Eminent Victorians* in 1918, Lawrence's *Women in Love* in 1922, the first volumes of Proust in 1913.<sup>32</sup> A comment in his diary on 7 May 1922 shows Forster making "careful and uninspired additions" to his Indian fragment "influenced by Proust." Thus Forster's novel is associated with some of the more avant-garde and modernist transformations in the culture of the day, and can also be seen to evolve toward a more postcolonial socio-political orientation.

As the newly surfaced letters to Masood show, significant in Forster's development as a writer was a growing suspicion with the rhetoric of conventional sentimental fiction which must have been heartily encouraged by all these parallel developments in literary culture. The evidence of the letters also indicates significant transformations in Forster's perceptions of the relationship between England and India—first as an

<sup>28</sup> For Forster's involvement with India in terms of its influences on his personality and work see Das (1977).

<sup>29</sup> Alexandria represented for Forster a resistance to and a release from conventional categories, and the expression of this release in cultural artefacts, especially in literature. See his comments in an unpublished piece "The Lost Guide": "That city symbolizes for me a mixture, a bastardy, an idea which I find congenial and opposed to that sterile idea of 100% in something or other which has impressed the modern world and forms the backbone of its blustering nationalisms. 100% in alcohol or examination marks may make sense, but 100% is meaningless when applied to living tissue, to a man or groups of men, and it is usually an excuse for arrogance or cruelty, as with Hitler. 100% British or American or Indian or Pakistani—no! No one could possibly speak of 100% Alexandrian and that is partly why I was happy in the place, and feel Cavafy its representative. It has been a mixture, a bastardy for nearly 2000 years—ever since it was founded by a Macedonian who believed in miscegenation and thought his father was an Egyptian god." See also Furbank, pp. 21-51ii; Beauman (1993), pp. 291-306; Spear and Aly, eds. (1987). On Alexandria in general see Forster's own books: *Pharos and Pharillon* (1923); *Alexandria* (1922).

<sup>30</sup> See Forster, "Mohammed el-Adl", King's Modern Archives.

<sup>31</sup> See also Forster on Amritsar in "Notes on the English Character," 1920, in (AH, p. 24); Sayer (1991).

<sup>32</sup> For a chronology of Forster's life with background events, see Gillie (1983), pp. 2-8.

allegory for his desire for Masood, and then as an intrinsically deferred process of desiring cultural community. In each case, the letters reveal that the background conception of *A Passage to India* resists the tendencies of the Liberal Orientalist sublime and strives toward a vision of society and its future which is affiliated to modernism and postcolonialism alike.

## GESTURE

AFTER DISCUSSING all of Forster's own deferrals and delays in the writing of *A Passage to India*, we now turn at last to the central element of this reading of that novel: the notion of *gesture*. The simple word "gesture" occurs all throughout Forster, to shiftingly subtle effect. Rather than tracing it comprehensively we shall cite some of the more revealing uses of the word and note a consistent relevance to the ideas explored up to this point in the chapter. We shall be asking, How have we arrived at gesture through this particular series of manoeuvres? Why should gesture be the focusing device for the postcolonial context? What is the relationship between text and gesture? How, in short, can text be capable of gesture and what does that have to do with postcolonialism? The basic answers to these questions concern the fact that Forster felt a certain anxiety about text and even verbal text in an imperial context; more than Woolf and Thompson, though, Forster tried to appeal to the reader through mechanisms entirely beyond systematic and grammatical linguistic structures—through rhythm, sound, and various polyphonic associations. Each of these devices is part of an effort to communicate without a rhetoric which might perpetuate or be implicated in dominative forms of one sort or another. In order to understand how such rhetorical turns can operate outside of language, we need constantly to examine the ways in which gesture can avoid being described by language and yet can inhere within a text itself—to examine the specific operation of a rhetoric of gesture, of a gestural rhetoric. Also, we need to connect this consistently with the resistance to domination which informs postcolonialism intrinsically. Ultimately, Forster's resistance to domination at a rhetorical level can be seen not only to enhance but also to motivate his comparable, and very resonant resistance to imperialism at a conceptual level—his gestural rhetoric is the foundation and fabric of his precursive relationship to postcolonialism.

An excellent case with which to begin is an almost allegorical image which occurs in three places in Forster's oeuvre—an inherently polyphonic situation. Two occurrences of the image are 1) in the essay called "Salute to the Orient!" from *Abinger Harvest* to which I have already briefly referred, and 2) in *A Passage to India* in the scene describing Adela's return to Europe.<sup>33</sup> Each instance involves the statue at Port Said of

<sup>33</sup> "Salute!" predates the 1924 publication of *Passage*, but was probably written at much the same time as the bulk of the novel, certainly as the section at the end of Ch. 29 where the statue of Lesseps appears (see below).

Ferdinand de Lesseps (1805-94), who built the Suez Canal.<sup>34</sup> The third occurrence 3) is in Forster's *Indian Journal* for 1912-1913; Forster's first impression of this statue, which furnished him with some of the exact words for both other descriptions, is recorded on 11 October from Port Said: "...the statue of Lesseps, pointing with one hand to the Canal and holding strings of sausages in the other, struck no unfamiliar note."<sup>35</sup> Forster begins his "Salute to the Orient!" with these same details:

Salute to the Orient! Given at Port Said presumably, where the statue of M. de Lesseps points to the Suez Canal with one hand and waves in the other a heavy bunch of large stone sausages. "*Me voici!*" he gesticulates, adding "*Le voilà*" as an afterthought. *Voilà* Egypt and Africa to the right, Syria and Asia to the left, while in front of M. de Lesseps is the sausages' outcome, the narrow trough that he has contrived across the sands to the Red Sea. It leads rather too far, that trough, to the mouths of the Indus and the Ganges, unmanageable streams. Nearer Port Said lie trouble and interest enough, skies that are not quite tropic, religions that are just comprehensible, people who grade into the unknown steeply, yet who sometimes recall European friends. (AH, p. 275)

Then, in Adela's passage back from India, we have the same scene in reverse:

With Egypt the atmosphere altered. The clean sands, heaped on each side of the canal, seemed to wipe off everything that was difficult or equivocal, and even Port Said looked pure and charming in the light of a rose-gray morning. She went on shore there with an American missionary, they walked out to the Lesseps statue, they drank the tonic air of the Levant. "To what duties, Miss Quested, are you returning in your own country after your taste of the tropics?" the missionary asked. "Observe, I don't say to what do you turn, but to what do you *re*-turn. Every life ought to contain both a turn and a *re*-turn. This celebrated pioneer" (he pointed to the statue) "will make my question clear. He turns to the East, he *re*-turns to the West. You can see it from the cute position of his hands, one of which holds a string of sausages." The missionary looked at her humorously, in order to cover the emptiness of his mind. He had no idea what he meant by "turn" and "return", but he often used words in pairs, for the sake of moral brightness. "I see," she replied. (PI, pp. 253-4)

In each of these scenes Lesseps' composite gesture to East and West is regarded as rather facile or vain. Forster emphasizes the inane "sausages," hardly a common food in Muslim Aden, in order to distract from the assumed gravity of an intended monument to imperialism. His message seems to be, "Not in this way, with such clumsy devices as linked sausages and a canal, will East and West be joined. Such a grand manoeuvre will not achieve unity." When in the second paragraph of his "Salute!" Forster prays, "May I never resemble M. de Lesseps in the first place; may no achievement upon an imposing scale be mine," he is certainly developing this point. By implication he is also valorizing sentiments which favor the incidental, the more immediately human, the

<sup>34</sup> See Fitzgerald (1978); Siegfried (1940).

<sup>35</sup> Journal contained in (HD, p. 120).



subtler gestures—not the great ossified sweep of Lesseps' stone hands, nor his canal. Instead of the imposing, Forster values the slight.<sup>36</sup>

Incidental support for this interest in gestures and slightness is provided throughout the essay, and in *Abinger Harvest* in general: in "Salute to the Orient!" there is an assessment of a novel by Marmaduke Pickthall—"This solemn and beautiful book has indeed the effect of a gesture" (AH, p. 290)—and in an earlier (1920) review of Wilfrid Blunt's diaries, there is a phrase imagining an egalitarian postcolonial utopia with no central authority—"its radiance will be stronger than a king's because the whole of humanity will contribute to it," ("Wilfrid Blunt," AH, p. 304). Neither the pomp of empire, nor its impressive works, nor its jingoistic culture has value for Forster; he prefers a simple friendly gesture of salute.<sup>37</sup>

What kind of salute?:

To greet the Orient is an agreeable exercise; but what good does it do, and who cares? Sound objections; yet the effort is desirable, partly because all who love the East ought to testify at the present moment, however great their ignorance, and partly because it recalls, scattered over so many classes and countries, one's Oriental friends. (AH, p. 292)

The salute begins and ends with these congenial gestures—to European and Asian friends—and implies, gestures toward, and never states a time of greater communication between pockets of humanity so awkwardly separated by Lesseps' absurd statue and all that it represents.

The image of the Lesseps statue also suggests that the standard Orientalist cliché of Suez as some sort of permeable membrane dividing East and West is as absurd as the grandiose attempt to unify East and West. Such an attempt presumes their separation, but Forster's ridiculing of the monument to that attempt makes mock not of the idea that East and West might meet, but of the earlier, more insidious idea that they are separate to begin with. Thus Forster's image confounds both the Orientalist sublime separating East and West and the Liberal dream of unifying them—each a species of power and of the dominant mode.

<sup>36</sup> Compare 17 April 1944 broadcast, "Books That Have Influenced Me": "Perhaps human beings are not much influenced by monuments. They gaze at the monument, say "Oh!" and pass on unchanged. Aren't they more likely to be influenced by smaller objects, objects nearer their own size? Anyhow, that's been my own case."

<sup>37</sup> Contrast E.J. Thompson's call for a grand, "magnanimous" gesture in OM (1925), pp. 131-2: "There is no commoner word on Indian lips today than *atonement*. England, they say, has never made atonement; and she must do it before we can be friends. The word in their minds is the Sanskrit *prayashitta*, usually translated atonement; but its meaning is rather a gesture. It is not larger measures of self-government for which they are longing, it is the magnanimous gesture of a great nation, so great that it can afford to admit mistakes and wrong-doing, and is too proud to distort facts."

Unless Forster's texts are read very carefully together this point is easily missed. But in conjunction with each other and through allusions to other passages subsequent to each one quoted above—in their polyphonic rhetoric of ironic gesture—these passages suggest an otherwise inexpressible community rather than a perpetuation of the Orientalist protocol of separation. That resistance to this idea cannot be openly stated is a matter of prior history and culture working almost entirely in the opposite direction; that strategies of subtle rhetoric must be employed to evoke the idea is a matter of Forster's combined sensitivity to and gesturing toward an emerging rhetoric of "slight" dissent.

If one reads the citation from *A Passage to India* on its own, Forster seems actually to endorse the Orientalist cliché of being safely out of the East after Suez. But is this cliché an accurate assessment of the larger effect of his various approaches to the subject? And even if it can be corrected by being read concurrently with other images does this polyphonic method of reading work in other cases? Consider the later scene in chapter 32, Fielding's entrance into the Mediterranean, which parallels Adela's own return home, and which can easily be read as a humanist's gasp of relief at more familiar surroundings: "He had forgotten the beauty of form among idol temples and lumpy hills; indeed without form, how can there be beauty?... Writing picture-postcards to his Indian friends, he felt that all of them would miss the joys he experienced now, the joys of form, and that this constituted a serious barrier," (PI, p. 270). This could be an indication that the humanistic discourse of the text begins shutting down as it regards with anxiety that particular peril of failing to convey its central tenets to a culture so different as India; and perhaps it is symptomatic that Fielding must rely on pictures to attempt communication over some sublime gulf which he begins to suspect language alone will not cross. On the other hand, perhaps this whole image is ironic, the rhetoric reflecting more of Fielding's thoughts and feelings than Forster's. The question about form and beauty is left unanswered—not necessarily because assent is assumed, and perhaps because dissent is encouraged. And if one reads the passage no longer on its own, but in conjunction with other passages suggested by it, a more suggestively polyphonic texture begins to emerge.

Especially given the passionate evocation of Muslim form and beauty given near the start of the novel within which Aziz and Mrs. Moore first become friends—and which we know from the 16 May 1920 letter to Masood was a generating influence in Forster's process of composition—this latter position that Fielding's liberal humanist Orientalism is ironic is just as tenable as its opposite. Perhaps Fielding is simply being

carried away on a rush of touristical enthusiasm, and is forgetting himself: "Form stammered here and there in a mosque, became rigid through nervousness even, but oh, these Italian churches!"—this is deliberately evoking his sentiments, not his rational thoughts, nor Forster's beliefs. The text here reflects, as so often in Forster, the character's tone of mind in any given moment irrespective of the author's more general ideas.<sup>38</sup> It also represents the unreliability of sentiment as a mechanism for expressing any substantive social and aesthetic ideology.

Certainly another reference to the postcards ten pages later subverts notions of Forster's or even Fielding's real commitment to such a Liberal Orientalist sublime—in the "Temple" section of the novel *Aziz* is presented thinking about the "rift" between him and Fielding: "then came the postcards from Venice, so cold, so unfriendly that all agreed that something was wrong; and finally, after a silence, the expected letter from Hampstead.... 'Some news that will surprise you. I am to marry someone whom you know....' He did not read further.... Subsequent letters he destroyed unopened," (PI, p. 283). Fielding's postcards, like his later letters, are not cold or unreadable because they have been written from emotionally chilly Europe or in a sublimely untranslatable discourse—rather they are not read simply because Aziz does not read them. He is so angry and anxious about his self-manufactured delusion that Fielding has married Adela and cheated him of much money that he shuts down all communication with his friend—the sort of grand, sweeping, unguarded adherence to an ill-examined principle, not a commonsensical truth, which has endangered many previous Forster characters who invest far too much authority in words at crucially bad moments: Rickie Elliot

<sup>38</sup> Much has been written on Forster's conspicuous tendency, even in earlier novels, to employ a sort of indirect discourse perhaps better characterized as the empathetic diction or 'tone of mind' of the characters speaking or thinking at any specific point; Forster's narrative and descriptive voice is often indistinguishable from that of his characters as a result of this tendency, which circumstance he manipulates to subtle effect. For more on this aspect of his narrative method see especially Colmer (1975), McConkey (1957), Rosencrance (1982), Heine, "Editor's Introduction" to LJ (1984), p. xiii. See also a letter to Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson of 8 May 1922: "I am bored not only by my creative impotence, but by the tiresomeness and conventionalities of fiction-form: e.g. the convention that one must view the action through the mind of one of the characters; and say of the others 'perhaps they thought', or at all events adopt their viewpoint for a moment only. If you can pretend you can get inside one character, why not pretend it about all the characters?... The studied ignorance of novelists grows wearisome. They must drop it." Also a 24 Nov 1944 broadcast, "The Art of Fiction": "I believe that a novelist can shift his point of view if it comes off.... Indeed this power to expand and contract perception (of which the shifting point of view is a symptom), this right to intermittent knowledge—I find one of the great advantages of the novel form, and it has a parallel in our perception of life. We are stupider at some times than others, aren't we: we can enter into other people's minds occasionally, but not always, because our own mind gets tired, and this intermittence lends in the long run variety and colour to the experiences we receive. A number of novelists have behaved like this to the characters in their books, played fast and loose with them as it were, and I can't see why they should be blamed for doing this."

carried away on a rush of touristical enthusiasm, and is forgetting himself: "Form stammered here and there in a mosque, became rigid through nervousness even, but oh, these Italian churches!"—this is deliberately evoking his sentiments, not his rational thoughts, nor Forster's beliefs. The text here reflects, as so often in Forster, the character's tone of mind in any given moment irrespective of the author's more general ideas.<sup>38</sup> It also represents the unreliability of sentiment as a mechanism for expressing any substantive social and aesthetic ideology.

Certainly another reference to the postcards ten pages later subverts notions of Forster's or even Fielding's real commitment to such a Liberal Orientalist sublime—in the "Temple" section of the novel *Aziz* is presented thinking about the "rift" between him and Fielding: "then came the postcards from Venice, so cold, so unfriendly that all agreed that something was wrong; and finally, after a silence, the expected letter from Hampstead.... 'Some news that will surprise you. I am to marry someone whom you know....' He did not read further.... Subsequent letters he destroyed unopened," (PI, p. 283). Fielding's postcards, like his later letters, are not cold or unreadable because they have been written from emotionally chilly Europe or in a sublimely untranslatable discourse—rather they are not read simply because Aziz does not read them. He is so angry and anxious about his self-manufactured delusion that Fielding has married Adela and cheated him of much money that he shuts down all communication with his friend—the sort of grand, sweeping, unguarded adherence to an ill-examined principle, not a commonsensical truth, which has endangered many previous Forster characters who invest far too much authority in words at crucially bad moments: Rickie Elliot

<sup>38</sup> Much has been written on Forster's conspicuous tendency, even in earlier novels, to employ a sort of indirect discourse perhaps better characterized as the empathetic diction or 'tone of mind' of the characters speaking or thinking at any specific point; Forster's narrative and descriptive voice is often indistinguishable from that of his characters as a result of this tendency, which circumstance he manipulates to subtle effect. For more on this aspect of his narrative method see especially Colmer (1975), McConkey (1957), Rosencrance (1982), Heine, "Editor's Introduction" to LJ (1984), p. xiii. See also a letter to Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson of 8 May 1922: "I am bored not only by my creative impotence, but by the tiresomeness and conventionalities of fiction-form: e.g. the convention that one must view the action through the mind of one of the characters; and say of the others 'perhaps they thought', or at all events adopt their viewpoint for a moment only. If you can pretend you can get inside one character, why not pretend it about all the characters?... The studied ignorance of novelists grows wearisome. They must drop it." Also a 24 Nov 1944 broadcast, "The Art of Fiction": "I believe that a novelist can shift his point of view if it comes off.... Indeed this power to expand and contract perception (of which the shifting point of view is a symptom), this right to intermittent knowledge—I find one of the great advantages of the novel form, and it has a parallel in our perception of life. We are stupider at some times than others, aren't we: we can enter into other people's minds occasionally, but not always, because our own mind gets tired, and this intermittence lends in the long run variety and colour to the experiences we receive. A number of novelists have behaved like this to the characters in their books, played fast and loose with them as it were, and I can't see why they should be blamed for doing this."



holds Stephen Wonham too firmly to his promise not to drink, and is unduly melodramatic in trying to prevent him from a harmless night in the pub (LJ, ch. 34, p. 282); Helen Schlegel narrativizes the world until there are demons walking across the universe from end to end (HE, p. 30); Leonard Bast is quite literally crushed under the weight of the books which he imagines possess some innate power to save him (HE, p. 321)—Aziz, like his predecessor characters, grants too much absolute authority to his friend's written but unread words, and misses the gesture of reconciliation which they are making, much less the unthreatening truth of their actual content that Fielding has married not Adela but Stella Moore. Thus the friends' discourse is vexed because it is confined too much to the verbal and literal truth of a single moment, with the result that the collection of gestures which convey a friend's appeal and constitute the most valuable communication are missed. As Fielding himself says to him, "Your emotions never seem in proportion to their objects, Aziz.... You always get the scale wrong, my dear fellow," (PI, p. 241, 261).<sup>39</sup>

At other times in the text, this rejection of "verbal truth" for "truth of mood" is explored. The most explicit use of the terms comes during Fielding's tea-party when Aziz is making silly, incorrect comments about an exoticized Mughal past: "Fielding did not even want to pull him up; he had dulled his craving for verbal truth and cared chiefly for truth of mood. As for Miss Quested, she accepted everything Aziz said as true verbally. In her ignorance, she regarded him as 'India', and never surmised that his outlook was limited and his method inaccurate, and that no one is India," (PI, p. 65). Adela precipitates a vast crisis when she carries this interpretative stance to its full extent in the Caves incident and obliterates any objective correlative by which to judge her experience of India—she overburdens her discourse and it collapses accordingly. This stands as a salutary warning to those who would interpret any corner of the text as the "real" text, or any single English novel of India as the "real" English Indian novel, or indeed any inaccurate methodology as something like the alternative formation envisioned by postcolonialism. Such positions read the novel, as well as a blossoming postcolonial sensibility in general, with verbal truth, in no relation to the inner and often oblique associations of text and context, and at the cost of any access to the truth of mood in a whole developing critical and creative genre. Forster's criterion is that a statement be not accurate but "convincing" (to use his own term from *Aspects of the Novel*, p. 62). The implication is always that accuracy is fallible: it leads to the

<sup>39</sup> Note the earlier expression of this idea in "Notes on the English Character," from (AH, pp. 13-26)—based on a piece written shortly after Forster's first trip to India, 1912-1913.



delusion that comprehensive knowledge can actually be achieved, that comprehensible language can convey such a thing—such things are aspects of an interpretative will-to-power, and hence analogous to imperialism, and furthermore place the burden of an unreal sublimity upon an otherwise fallible, limited human being, the author. Awareness of this is in essence a modernist position, and it also inclines specifically toward the postcolonial sensibility.

Thus the notion of verbal exactitude has a methodological relevance which becomes clear when contrasted with the subtler procedure of regarding a textual moment not so much on its own but polyphonically, in conjunction with others similar or marginal to it. Consider in this light Adela's sense in Suez of being cleansed of "difficulty and equivocalty." Her time spent in India has been a concerted effort to clarify and make explicit—her marriage to Ronny, the quest for the "real" India, the issues of forensic truth brought up in the trial scene. This operation in and around her is seen as an expression of her blindness (and the blindness of her Liberal intellectual society) to a larger imperialistic agenda; given the uncontainable variety of human life in India or in any other complex history, culture, and geography, it is also seen as irresponsibly ambitious. Thus a mind which can even expect to see the real India, a mind which can project its frustrations at failing to do such an impossible thing into the exaggerated but actual terror of an imagined rape, even a mind which can see the rather sordid Port Said as "pure and charming"—this mind is offered up by the irony of the text as a mind somewhat limited, even dysfunctional. Adela in her effort to define and see the "real" has misread everything, and in the end she sees only her own interpretations. Her discourse becomes solipsistic in its own turn, being dependent upon the solipsism of the Liberal Orientalist sublime. And she is like Aziz in mistaking as real the products of her diseased imagination.<sup>40</sup> She stands, furthermore, like the statue of Lesseps, somewhat mocked: such interpretative efforts as each has made, missing as they do the moral crisis at the heart of imperialism, are ultimately reduced to uninterpretable echoes. Thus the uninterpretable element is not India—rather the attempt to apprehend "India" within textual closure and verbal exactitude forecloses interpretation and results first in frustration and then in silence.<sup>41</sup> The text regards such contortions as tantamount to false accusations of rape, as immoral, as mad.

<sup>40</sup> Stewart Ansell asks Rickie Elliott (LJ, p. 17): "Did it never strike you that phenomena may be of two kinds: *one*, those which have a real existence . . . , *two*, those which are the subjective product of a diseased imagination, and which, to our destruction, we invest with the semblance of reality?"

<sup>41</sup> Rather than using over determined language which then collapses into incoherence, Forster in one instance valorizes silence over language altogether (PI, p. 125): "There are periods in the most thrilling

Perhaps Adela is most at home in the margin which is Port Said, where like Lesseps she can make definitive junctions between the positions which her diseased imagination sees as separate, hidden from each other, or in need of a Liberal humanist benignity to perceive and thereby "unify" them. The utter vapidness of such an idea is bluntly satirized by Forster's figure of the pedantic missionary, with his meaningless discourse of "words in pairs" and "moral brightness." Forster's keen ear pokes fun at the emphasis of the American pronunciation of "*re-turn*" and in doing so renders the wordplay even more trivial than it would have been otherwise. The missionary's words mean nothing, his witticism hangs on nothing more than the contingent fact of his differently stressed accent, and the yoking of "turn" and "*re-turn*" implies nothing beyond his own self-absorption. His pun is as pointless as Lesseps' imposing achievement, as Adela's futile and disastrous attempt to see the real India—and each is like the image of an unopened Marabar cave, "bubble-shaped" with "neither ceiling nor floor and mirror[ing] its own darkness in every direction infinitely," (PI, p. 118). Furthermore, each image constitutes a collapsed discourse which is to be understood not as a species of Liberal Orientalist sublime, but as an effort in the text to evacuate language and clear space for the less reifiable rhetoric of gesture.

THUS WE SEE how the notion of gesture connects to one of the chief messages of the text and serves to rescue Forster from accusations that he is endorsing the Liberal Orientalist sublime; instead of figuring India as uninterpretable, the text construes the imperial discourse as simultaneously incapable of interpreting and unaware of this incapacity. There is, however, a motion toward and a desire for something more than this: call it connection, or friendship, or even form—not form in the humanistic sense employed by Fielding, but form in the context of genre and rhetorical ideology. What is to be the form of that communication between races which the text so desires—if not language, empire of signs, then what? And how does one express that, if the inherited forms (social and critical realism in the novel, for example, and even grammar) have ceased to be able to communicate because of the collapse of faith in the rhetoric of the

---

day during which nothing happens, and though we continue to exclaim 'I do enjoy myself' or 'I am horrified' we are insincere. 'As far as I feel anything, it is enjoyment, horror'—it's no more than that really, and a perfectly adjusted organism would be silent." See Burra (1934), pp. 581-94: "It is the Anonymous Prophecy that will remain with us, the transcendent beauty of the Mosque and Temple, and the athletic body of Stephen. It would perhaps be merely stupid to ask, in conclusion, for more. It is possible that the mind which saw so visionarily the significance of Stephen, and which could tell the Wilcoxes that 'nothing has been done wrong', has achieved their own wisdom; that the organism, being perfectly adjusted, is silent." On silence see Orange, in Das and Beer, eds. (1979); Laurence (1993).

sentimental and in direct expression generally? The answer is again gesture. Having presented the patterns by which the gestures of the text devalorize the grand impositions of empire and language, we can now turn to the mechanisms by which gesture, as a textual device, helps evoke an answer to a question which we have already construed as unanswerable in language: what is the relationship between gesture and modernism?

## GESTURE AND MODERNISM

ONE OF THE MORE INTERESTING features of Forster's use of the word gesture in other places than *A Passage to India* is that it often connects with some discussion of modernism or a modernist author—T. S. Eliot, Proust, Virginia Woolf, Conrad. In *Abinger Harvest* Forster collected together four articles in which a specific interest in gesture constitutes his interest in the unique modernisms of each writer.<sup>42</sup> Of Eliot's *Prufrock* he says—with a turn of phrase at the end which now seems quite familiar—"here was a protest, and a feeble one, and the more congenial for being feeble. For what, in that world of gigantic horror, was tolerable except the slighter gestures of dissent," (AH, p. 102). He speaks of the Great War, but what he says is equally relevant to the "gigantic horror" of imperialism—that the only way to make any resistance to it and not to provoke retribution or be ignored is through congenial, feeble, "slighter gestures of dissent." Mrs. Moore's refusal to testify for or against Aziz in the trial in *A Passage to India* can be seen as one of these slight gestures: she says, "I have heard both English and Indians speak well of him, and I felt it isn't the sort of thing he would do." Ronny responds, "Feeble, mother, feeble,"—and her defiantly affirmative answer echoes Forster's endorsement of Eliot: "Most feeble," (PI, p. 196). She clings to the authority of her individual, impressionistic feebleness, and refuses to be implicated in the "machinery" of empire. So too, in an earlier squabble with her son, she is sensitive to gestural detail and notes how it can implicate language which might otherwise seem to be justifiable. Ronny speaks:

"We're not out here for the purpose of behaving pleasantly.... We're out here to do justice and to keep the peace. Them's my sentiments. India isn't a drawing room...."

He spoke sincerely, but she could have wished with less gusto. How Ronny revelled in the drawbacks of his situation! How he did rub it in that he was not in India to behave pleasantly, and derived positive satisfaction therefrom! He reminded her of his public-school days. The traces of young-man humanitarianism had sloughed off, and he talked like an intelligent and embittered boy. His words without his voice might have impressed her, but when she heard the self-satisfied lilt of them, when she saw the mouth moving so complacently and competently beneath the little red nose, she felt, quite illogically, that this was not the last word on India. One touch of regret—not the canny substitute but the true regret from the heart—would

42 "T. S. Eliot" (1928), "Proust" (1929), "The Early Novels of Virginia Woolf" (1925), "Joseph Conrad: A Note" (1920). See also TCD, "Two Books by T. S. Eliot" (1949, '50); "Virginia Woolf," (1941); "English Prose Between 1918 and 1939" (1944). See also "English Literature Since the War" and "Modern Writing", King's Modern Archives: "Joyce and Woolf made people less stable, more [n.b.—illegible], and unrecognizable as people except in their immediate surroundings.... A world gone to pieces, a world where character scarcely counts, and where no individual has much of a chance of a permanent relationship with another."

have made him a different man, and the British Empire a different institution. (PI, 43-44)

At this early point in the text she herself has not yet begun to manipulate the rhetoric of gesture, the resonance of feebleness, a refusal to speak when language will only implicate her further. She plows into her point, and loses Ronny's attention by overburdening her ideas with language, names, defined categories of dogma:

"I'm going to argue, and indeed dictate," she said clinking her rings. "The English *are* out here to be pleasant."

"How do you make that out, mother?" he asked, speaking gently again, for he was ashamed of his irritability.

"Because India is part of the earth. And God has put us on the earth in order to be pleasant to each other. God...is...love." She hesitated, seeing how much he disliked the argument, but something made her go on. "God has put us on earth to love our neighbours and to show it, and He is omnipresent, even in India, to see how we are succeeding."

He looked gloomy, and a little anxious. He knew this religious strain in her, and that it was a symptom of bad health; there had been much of it when his stepfather died. He thought, "She is certainly ageing, and I ought not to be vexed with anything she says."

"The desire to behave pleasantly satisfies God.... The sincere if impotent desire wins His blessing. I think everyone fails, but there are so many kinds of failure. Goodwill and more goodwill and more goodwill. Though I speak with the tongues of...."

He waited until she had done, and then said gently: "I quite see that. I suppose I ought to get off to my files now, and you'll be going to bed...."

Mrs Moore felt that she had made a mistake in mentioning God, but she found Him increasingly difficult to avoid as she grew older, and He had been constantly in her thoughts since she entered India, though oddly enough He satisfied her less. She must needs pronounce His name frequently, as the greatest she knew, yet she had never found it less efficacious. Outside the arch there seemed always an arch, beyond the remotest echo a silence. (PI, p. 45)

Her problem is not that she has been silenced by some capricious Indian sublimity, but rather by the weight of the gigantic horror of imperialism. This cannot be argued against, being essentially a matter of force—as Ronny says, "I am out here to work, mind, to hold this wretched country by force," (PI, p. 44); neither can it be confronted directly, being of vastly superior force—as Forster says of Eliot, "He who measured himself against the war, who drew himself to his full height, as it were, and said to Armadillo-Armageddon, 'Avaunt!' collapsed at once into a pinch of dust," (AH, pp. 102-103). But a "slighter gesture of dissent" such as Mrs. Moore learns to employ later in the text—and which ultimately takes the form of her actually quitting India, so to speak, in a clear precursor to the situation of a postcolonial India from which the colonizing English have departed but in which they continue to be uncannily resonant—has the effect, and most pointedly not the language, of having "preserved a tiny drop of



our self-respect, and [of having] carried on the human heritage,"—to use again Forster's words on Eliot.

The Eliot essay is immensely useful for discussing modernist strategies for avoiding definitive language as Forster understands them. Forster valorizes Eliot's poetical rhetoric and its relationship to the Great War in ways which translate almost directly into an assessment of *A Passage to India* and its relationship to imperialism. "Here was a poet whose gesture, whatever its ultimate intention, certainly was not a handshake," (AH, p. 103)—this phrase recalls a vivid image in *Passage* which echoes many of the same concerns involving collapsing language and structures of surety, which follows the same pattern as the passage of Mrs. Moore's thoughts quoted above, and which even uses the word "gesture" to a resonant and ironic effect. Adela and Fielding conclude their awkward conversation in the flat aftermath of the trial on something like a note of reconciliation in the wake of a gigantic, horrible storm:

A friendliness, as of dwarfs shaking hands, was in the air. Both man and woman were at the height of their powers—sensible, honest, even subtle. They spoke the same language, and held the same opinions, and the variety of age and sex did not divide them. Yet they were dissatisfied. When they agreed, "I want to go on living a bit," or "I don't believe in God," the words were followed by a curious backwash, as though the universe had displaced itself to fill up a tiny void, or as though they had seen their own gestures from an immense height—dwarfs talking, shaking hands and assuring each other that they stood on the same footing of insight.... But wistfulness descended on them now, as on other occasions; the shadow of the shadow of a dream fell over their clear-cut interests, and objects never seen again seemed messages from another world. (PI, p. 252)

Here the actual image of the hand-shaking gesture is used to convey the draining out of language, the ephemerality of communication between solidly maintained categories of any sort, class, or race. As such it serves to prefigure the frustrations of the text's conclusion in which intimacy between men, races, and nations is blocked not by any sublime universal hierarchy, but by the actual rhetoric of accusation, nationalism, selfish desire—by any language which strives to exclude rather than include. "Clear-cut interests" even when they coincide, have no access to "another world" in which the oppressions of imperialism and greed have somehow never occurred, and in which a purer form of communication might be possible. But that possibility is only the "shadow of the shadow of a dream," and can only be gestured toward, never expressed, much less realized.

Why not? Of Eliot, Forster himself says, "Why, if he believes in it, can he not say it out straight and face the consequences," (AH, p. 105). What is the point of such difficulty—of an entire discourse of difficulty and gesture—in which "the verse always

sounds beautiful but often conveys nothing. The prose always conveys something but is often occupied in tracing the boundaries of the unsaid,"? For Eliot this has something to do with preserving cultural tradition from the assaults of war. For Forster, however, it has to do with the moral crisis at the heart of imperialism: in the face of this no amount of liberal or humanist or otherwise well-intentioned rhetoric can apprehend the extent of the damage to the human spirit. Thus, of "The Waste Land", as much as of the moral waste land of British India and of his own attempt to depict its consequences in prose, Forster says,

"It is about the fertilizing waters that arrived too late. It is a poem of horror. The earth is barren, the sea salt, the fertilizing thunderstorms broke too late. And the horror is so intense that the poet has an inhibition and is unable to state it openly.

What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow  
Out of the stony rubbish? Son of man,  
You cannot say, or guess, for you know only  
A heap of broken images.

He cannot say "Avaunt!" to the horror or he would crumble into dust. Consequently, there are outworks and blind alleys all over the poem. (AH, p. 107)<sup>43</sup>

Such an attitude might incline toward obscurity or obscurantism, as Forster feels it does with Conrad whose "constant discrepancies between his nearer and his further vision" result in a "secret casket of genius [which] contains a vapour rather than a jewel," (AH, "Joseph Conrad: A Note," p. 152) For another modernist novelist, Virginia Woolf, such a discourse of difficult gesture is equally intentional but more productive in the face of various crises: "In the stream of glittering smiles, unfinished sentences, hectic catalogs, unanchored proper names, we seem to be going nowhere. Yet the goal comes, the method and the matter prove to have been one," (AH, "The Early Novels of Virginia Woolf," p. 123)—the goal being the very fleeting apprehension of the fleetingness of the real world: "life; London; this moment in June." As for Proust, Forster construes his modernist interest in method as a balance between despair and curiosity, which accounts for a life-affirming quality of the moment (similar to Woolf's and of which Eliot's work is perhaps the opposite): "*A la recherche du temps perdu* is an epic of curiosity and of despair. It is an adventure in the modern

<sup>43</sup> An coincidental allusion to the end of Section 2 of "The Waste Land" occurs on (PI, p. 71), after Fielding's tea party, with a series of repeating "goodbyes": "Goodbye Miss Quested," "Goodbye Dr Aziz," "Goodbye Mrs Moore," "Goodbye Dr Aziz," and so on. This most probably predates Eliot's similar chorus of goodbyes—"Goodnight Lou.... Goodnight sweet ladies, goodnight"—as it comes in the part of the text composed before the publication of Eliot's poem in 1922. The same cadence of goodbyes occurs in (HE, pp. 331-2)—"and again and again fell the word, like the ebb of a dying sea"—but also predates Eliot, having been written in 1910, 12 years before the publication of "The Waste Land".

mode where the nerves and brain as well as the blood take part, and the whole man moves forward to encounter he does not know what; certainly not to any goal," (AH, "Proust," p. 111).<sup>44</sup> This motion is essential to the "modern mode," just as much as the absence of any goal is essential to Forster's prefiguration of the postcolonial condition. Striving after goals and boundaries and possessions has constituted the colonial; that which will come after it will be a dissolution of those tendencies, if not necessarily those borders, and any conception of the *postcolonial* must be premised upon nothing more defined than that.

Furthermore, there is for Forster a power in art to evoke this motion with no goal—evolution without progression—a power predicated on the ability within the literary to operate without language: gesturing toward this idea, and refusing to describe it linguistically, Forster offers "... but on the whole ... one cannot put it more strongly than that: on the whole art is best," (AH, p. 114).<sup>45</sup> One has to be delicate about this and not even be obvious that one is doing it, otherwise method takes over from message as the principal emphasis, and as Forster himself warns in *Aspects of the Novel*, "The novelist who betrays too much interest in his own method can never be more than interesting," (AN, p. 56); similarly, "Since the novel is itself often colloquial, it may possibly withhold some of its secrets from the graver and grander streams of criticism, and may reveal them to backwaters and shallows," (AN, 'Author's Note', p. xvii). It is the slighter gestures which communicate.<sup>46</sup>

Forster's point can be elucidated further by looking more at his interest in Proust. When he started revising *A Passage to India* he commented in his diary on 7 May 1922 that he was making "careful and uninspired additions ... influenced by Proust". Oliver Stallybrass, editor of the manuscripts, expresses confusion at what these

<sup>44</sup> See also the discussion of Proust's "curiosity" as an exemplar of the spirit of his age in "Three Generations", obviously a source for the essay in AH: "[Proust's characters] are bound on a sort of adventure—not an adventure of the swashbuckling sort but the adventure of the disillusioned post-war world, when the whole man moves forward to encounter he knows not what: certainly not to any goal." Proust's influence on Forster was fairly extensive. He attests to this throughout AN (pp. 4, 20, 47, 113-115, 122, 127, 129); and in letters and interviews from throughout his career. One example is in a 1963 letter to V. A. Shahane: "Jane Austen and Proust have certainly influenced me—the latter not before 1920 when I began reading to read him." A sustained discussion of Proust comes in a 31 March 1943 broadcast, "Some Books".

<sup>45</sup> See Joseph (1964), pp. 34-35, 38.

<sup>46</sup> See also a 29 April 1942 broadcast, "India in Literature," p. 148: "People like ourselves ['who care about what is intangible and delicate and harmonious in life'] are in the long run the only reliable interpreters. We don't issue statistics, we don't preach sermons, we don't formulate creeds. Ours is ordinary human intercourse, but it is touched and heightened by our belief in the potential greatness of man, which includes aesthetic greatness and consequently we stumble upon truths which are missed by the so-called practical observer."

mode where the nerves and brain as well as the blood take part, and the whole man moves forward to encounter he does not know what; certainly not to any goal," (AH, "Proust," p. 111).<sup>44</sup> This motion is essential to the "modern mode," just as much as the absence of any goal is essential to Forster's prefiguration of the postcolonial condition. Striving after goals and boundaries and possessions has constituted the colonial; that which will come after it will be a dissolution of those tendencies, if not necessarily those borders, and any conception of the *postcolonial* must be premised upon nothing more defined than that.

Furthermore, there is for Forster a power in art to evoke this motion with no goal—evolution without progression—a power predicated on the ability within the literary to operate without language: gesturing toward this idea, and refusing to describe it linguistically, Forster offers "... but on the whole ... one cannot put it more strongly than that: on the whole art is best," (AH, p. 114).<sup>45</sup> One has to be delicate about this and not even be obvious that one is doing it, otherwise method takes over from message as the principal emphasis, and as Forster himself warns in *Aspects of the Novel*, "The novelist who betrays too much interest in his own method can never be more than interesting," (AN, p. 56); similarly, "Since the novel is itself often colloquial, it may possibly withhold some of its secrets from the graver and grander streams of criticism, and may reveal them to backwaters and shallows," (AN, 'Author's Note', p. xvii). It is the slighter gestures which communicate.<sup>46</sup>

Forster's point can be elucidated further by looking more at his interest in Proust. When he started revising *A Passage to India* he commented in his diary on 7 May 1922 that he was making "careful and uninspired additions . . . influenced by Proust". Oliver Stallybrass, editor of the manuscripts, expresses confusion at what these

<sup>44</sup> See also the discussion of Proust's "curiosity" as an exemplar of the spirit of his age in "Three Generations", obviously a source for the essay in AH: "[Proust's characters] are bound on a sort of adventure—not an adventure of the swashbuckling sort but the adventure of the disillusioned post-war world, when the whole man moves forward to encounter he knows not what: certainly not to any goal." Proust's influence on Forster was fairly extensive. He attests to this throughout AN (pp. 4, 20, 47, 113-115, 122, 127, 129); and in letters and interviews from throughout his career. One example is in a 1963 letter to V. A. Shahane: "Jane Austen and Proust have certainly influenced me—the latter not before 1920 when I began reading to read him." A sustained discussion of Proust comes in a 31 March 1943 broadcast, "Some Books".

<sup>45</sup> See Joseph (1964), pp. 34-35, 38.

<sup>46</sup> See also a 29 April 1942 broadcast, "India in Literature," p. 148: "People like ourselves ['who care about what is intangible and delicate and harmonious in life'] are in the long run the only reliable interpreters. We don't issue statistics, we don't preach sermons, we don't formulate creeds. Ours is ordinary human intercourse, but it is touched and heightened by our belief in the potential greatness of man, which includes aesthetic greatness and consequently we stumble upon truths which are missed by the so-called practical observer."



changes might be—"which these were is . . . anyone's guess"—although certainly a clue is provided by Forster's consistent commentary on the "petite phrase" from a sonata of Vinteuil which Proust causes to appear throughout his vast novel, a detail which Forster explores in *Aspects of the Novel*. His discussion of rhythm presents this "petite phrase" as a device by which a text can "hang together because it is stitched internally," (AN, p. 113). The "repetition plus variation" (AN, p. 115) of the "petite phrase" in varying contexts makes "us feel we are in a homogeneous world"—in other words, it creates the effect to which the rhythms and gestures of *A Passage to India* are certainly and constantly striving.<sup>47</sup>

The words Forster uses to discuss the rhythmic gesture of this "petite phrase" in both the Proust essay and *Aspects of the Novel* suggest aspects of his own novel most immediately. Consider this characterization of the "petite phrase": "It is always a living being, but takes various forms," (AN, p. 114): this recalls (among other things from *A Passage to India*) the snake which might be a stick; the indeterminate green bird; the strange hairy animal which runs into the Nawab Bahadur's car.<sup>48</sup> Most rhythmic is the process by which Mrs. Moore is transfigured from a moonlit pillar into a woman, a force for reconciliation between races, a nuisance, and by degrees into a rallying cry for the defense of Aziz, the local deity Esmiss Esmoor, a memory, the echo of a wasp, her son Ralph—always a living reminder of Aziz's friend, but in various forms. Mrs. Moore in the novel is like a "little phrase [which] crosses the book again and again, but as an echo, a memory; we like to encounter it, but it has no binding power," (AN, p. 114). Similarly, the echo which haunts *A Passage to India* is one of the book's most salient characteristics, but it cannot be described and it does not constitute a theme nor "harden into a symbol,"—what is the meaning of "Ou-boum," what is the point? Part of the point of rhythm is to be forgotten and then remembered: "not to be there all the

<sup>47</sup> Coming in between the two major periods of work on *A Passage to India*, Proust's influence certainly contributed to the emergence of various devices and motifs in the text, although Forster had already begun to develop a mechanism of leitmotiven and expanding symbolism even as early as his first drafts of LJ. See Heine, "Editor's Introduction," (LJ, pp. x-xv).

<sup>48</sup> Page references to the principal occurrences of these images in PI are as follows: snake/stick, p. 132; green bird, p. 77-78; hairy animal, p. 80-81. Two of these images derives from things Forster actually saw in India while he was at Dewas in 1921; letters and comments describing the original real-life scenes are in HD: snake/stick, p. 35; hairy animal, p. 53. Even though these things are not the same kind of phenomenon—in the Forster examples it is the indeterminacy which is important, whereas in Proust what matters is the specific pattern of change in roughly the same kind of phrase—regarding the two phenomena together emphasizes the rhythmic, repetitive qualities common to them. Also, both PI and HD comment on India and the definition of things in a similar fashion: (PI, p. 78) "Nothing in India is identifiable. The mere asking of a questions causes it to disappear or merge into something else," and (HD, p. 35) "Everything that happens is said to be one thing and proves to be another."



time like a pattern, but by its lovely waxing and waning to fill us with surprise and freshness and hope," (AN, p. 115): even this recalls the imagery of the moon which waxes and wanes throughout Forster's novel, suggesting nothing more than itself and its rhythmic, hopeful constancy shining over Chandrapore, which name means literally the City of the Moon. The moon, the echo, Mrs. Moore: each is like the "petite phrase" which is not a banner that "can only reappear"; rather, as rhythm, it "can develop.... It is almost an actor, but not quite, and that 'not quite' means that its power has gone toward stitching Proust's book together from the inside, and towards the establishment of beauty and the ravishing of the reader's memory," (AN, p. 115)—as indeed ravishment and its tendentious but resonant association with rape are at the center of the text of *A Passage to India*, and stitch the text together yet do "not quite" happen.

These are examples of a gestural rhetoric, rather than an evocative or even empathetic one. They are more vivid because they function between texts which must be read polyphonically together. They deliberately exacerbate the conventions of descriptive language and opt instead for an intratextual fabric of allusion. Shown resonating polyphonically between genres, transgressing upon the momentary dominative authority of a single text or genre, and operating within the *relations* between creative and critical modes, they can be seen to constitute something of a proto-modernist methodology which is also a precursor for postcolonialism. They can be seen to gesture toward an unstated but comprehensive texture of community between separate texts within an oeuvre, between disparate ideas within a mind and a culture, between separated peoples within a larger culture.

When Forster coyly comments that he "cannot find any analogy" to musical rhythm in fiction—at the end of a long discussion of it in *Aspects of the Novel*—he points as obviously as possible to his own work: "I cannot quote you any parallels for that in fiction, yet it may be present.... In music fiction is likely to find its nearest parallel," (AN, pp. 113, 116).<sup>49</sup> The fact that he has not actually announced this parallel between the rhythms of Proust and those of *A Passage to India*, or between his local literary criticism and a more general social vision, makes his disingenuous suggestion more gestural, less subject to the potentially reifying tendency of a label, and more suggestive of his concluding idea—that "[music] does offer in its final expression a type of beauty which fiction might achieve in its own way. Expansion. That is the idea the novelist

<sup>49</sup> Compare Forster "The Creator as Critic," pp. 115-6: "when [a creative writer] criticises others he usually has his own work in mind, and assumes that their creative process was, ought to have been, the same as his own."

must cling to. Not completion. Not rounding off but opening out," (AN, p. 116). On such a note does *A Passage to India* begin, develop, and end; its final words, "not yet, not there" gesture in all that they leave unsaid toward the same essentially utopic notion with which this section of *Aspects of the Novel* ends: that of "a larger existence than was possible at the time," (AN, p. 116).

The "final expression" of *Aspects of the Novel* carries these ideas and refusals of expression further still—into what amounts to a prophecy for postcolonialism, and for Forster's own involvement as a novelist in the process of preparing for it. I use the word prophecy in Forster's own sense: as "tone of voice . . . or the mere raising of human love and hatred to such a power that their normal receptacles no longer contain them," (AN, p. 86). Although he is describing the creative process of modernist fiction-making, his tone of voice speaks beyond this and might well be describing the creative processes of empire-dismantling and of postcolonialism:

All I will do is state a possibility. If human nature does alter, it will be because individuals manage to look at themselves in a new way. Here and there people—a very few people, but a few novelists among them—are trying to do this. Every institution and vested interest is against such a search: organized religion, the state, the family in its economic aspect, have nothing to gain, and it is only when outward prohibitions weaken that it can proceed: history conditions it to that extent. Perhaps the searchers will fail, perhaps it is impossible for the instrument of contemplation to contemplate itself, perhaps if it is possible it means the end of imaginative literature—which if I understand him rightly is the view of that acute enquirer, Mr I. A. Richards. Anyhow—that way lies movement and even combustion for the novel, for if the novelist sees himself differently he will see his characters differently, and a new system of lighting will result. (AN, p. 118)

As an allegory, this rhetoric gestures toward the inspirations of postcolonialism in that it gestures toward the vision of the future of the novel and toward the successors of *A Passage to India*. The rhetoric itself is only a possibility, a transitional phase, an appeal, an invitation, a desire, an exquisite hope—and most importantly, it is a *process*. Forster sees "two movements of the human mind: the great tedious onrush known as history, and a shy crab-like sideways movement." Symptomatically, he expresses that process which means most to him and in which he places most faith not as a voice or a definitive genre—language, literature, the novel—counterposed with solid history; instead he characterizes a movement, a gesture, and a meandering, "shy, crab-like" one at that. In its very meandering that movement can lead to the "wider view"—to the extent that "the phrase 'the development of the novel' might cease to be a pseudo-scholarly tag or a technical triviality, and become important, because it implied the development of humanity," (AN, p. 119) Insofar as its untrivial and legitimate

scholarly inspirations have striven to connect the development of the novel with the development of an imperial sensibility—and beyond those phases, in the “new system of lighting,” with a postimperial one—postcolonialism and its involvement in the development of humanity can be seen to have in Forster’s words a “shy crab-like sideways” precursor.

GESTURE AND *A PASSAGE TO INDIA*

BEFORE TURNING at last to the motifs of the hand, the invitation, and the inarticulable, I want to make the transition into *A Passage to India* by offering several more examples of that novel's general involvement in the notion of gesture. I hope that these will elaborate upon the ideas posited above, and constitute the sort of ever-deepening scrutiny which the novel itself seems to demand. The following passage is noteworthy not so much for what it says, nor even for how it says it—but for what it implies about gestural methodologies in general and about Forster's relationship to English literature in India.

Aziz and his friends are celebrating after the end of the trial and his exoneration from guilt in the charges leveled by Adela. Fielding is of course among the company, and is trying to convince Aziz not to sue Adela for exorbitant damages. The passage is conspicuous for a particular subtlety and complexity which are relevant to the idea of gesture supplanting language. Aziz begins by calling attention to the differences which in his friendships with Fielding, Mrs. Moore, and even Adela he had hoped to overcome:

"The approval of your compatriots no longer interests me, I have become anti-British, and ought to have done so sooner, it would have saved me numerous misfortunes."

"Including knowing me."

"I say, shall we go and pour water onto Mohammed Latif's face? He is so funny when this is done to him asleep."

The remark was not a question but a full stop. Fielding accepted it as such and there was a pause, pleasantly filled by a little wind which managed to brush the top of the house. The banquet, though riotous, had been agreeable, and now the blessings of leisure—unknown to the West, which either works or idles—descended on the motley company. Civilization strays about like a ghost here, revisiting the ruins of empire, and is to be found not in great works of art or mighty deeds, but in the gestures well-bred Indians make when they sit or lie down. Fielding, who had dressed up in native costume, learned from his excessive awkwardness in it that all his motions were makeshifts, whereas when the Nawab Bahadur stretched out his hand for food, or Nureddin applauded a song, something beautiful had been accomplished which needed no development. This restfulness of gesture—it is the Peace that passeth Understanding, after all, it is the social equivalent of Yoga. When the whirring of action ceases, it becomes visible, and reveals a civilization which the West can disturb but will never acquire. The hand stretches out for ever, the lifted knee has the eternity though not the sadness of the grave. Aziz was full of civilization this evening, complete, dignified, rather hard, and it was with diffidence that the other said: "Yes, certainly you must let off Miss Quested easily. She must pay all your costs, that is only fair, but don't treat her like a conquered enemy." (PI, p. 239)

The passage is full of obvious implications—major themes of the books—which need only be mentioned in passing here. The last note of not perpetuating the oppressions of empire with the oppressions of nationalism or anti-imperialism, is a sentiment clear enough throughout the text, and one connected to the familiar vexations of postcolonialism which we have discussed. So too is the sense that there are a grace and felicity in aspects of Indian life generally unappreciated by the British and Anglo-Indians, much to their loss because it happens to be pleasant. Forster's conspicuous and uncharacterizable mysticism—which Roger Fry regretted so<sup>50</sup>—is at play. Even the image of Fielding dressed up in native costume might be grouped with a certain fairly familiar category of Orientalist rhetoric: Fielding as another 'Friend of all the World', like Kipling's Kim, infiltrating the habit of the native in a subliminal attempt to co-opt the native gaze, voice, understanding. Again, however, I do not believe that this passage illustrates Forster's endorsement of the Liberal Orientalist sublime which renders India inherently inexpressible and exotic—and, as before, the reason for this is the subtle emphasis underlying all of these otherwise noteworthy aspects: the emphasis on gesture.

Gesture, "the restfulness of gesture," is the principal feature which Forster regards here—as much as he can emphasize such a thing without compromising its character as subtle, inconspicuous, and contingently allusive to other things.<sup>51</sup> Civilization is apparently to be found in gesture, not in mighty deeds such as the building and maintenance of the Suez Canal or the British Raj nor in great works of art such as even this novel; as Forster prayed beneath the statue of Lesseps, "May no achievement upon an imposing scale be mine!" (AH, p. 275). Such illusions pass away, but within the human being abides the potential always to recreate, and to build upon innate gifts—man being, for the humanist, the measure of all things. One of these things is the artfulness and immediacy of a gesture which in and of itself can suggest beauty or might. A thing expressed in language departs somewhat from the purity of its idea implied in a gesture—and expression incites us to indulge in interpretation or

<sup>50</sup> V. Woolf (1940), pp. 240-241.

<sup>51</sup> Compare Forster, "The Last of Abinger," in (TCD, p. 357-358), in which he describes a final fishing expedition with an old uncomplicated friend: "The loveliness of indifference! The restfulness! The happiness not mystic or intense! Nothing hanging on it. Now it is 1.0 a.m. I lie down on my pond, but first will read what I have written.—Have done so.—My hour at Paddington [pond] has not come through. I have not the vocabulary, my mind is not sufficiently equable. Yet I still see the fishes' tails breaking the water and the small white float which they never approached.—I am sleepy, I should like the kindly meaninglessness in my dreams. I must go to my pond, to its depths which are not deep, only a couple of feet, but out of sight."



"development" which need not be necessary. If this and all the other forms of "whirling action" ever could stop, this passage suggests, the ideal gestures which motivate the universe would become visible, tangible, imitable. In doing so, they would constitute a civilization which neither the West nor any other arrogance could dominate, however much and however disturbingly it might try. Such a vaguely Platonic utopia is Forster's vision; it "strays about like a ghost" throughout his text in the form of images and devices and motifs—all gestures—which convey what his otherwise estimable powers of description, logic, and humaneness cannot.

Like Fielding's self-awareness in his native costume, Forster throughout the text manipulates the rhetoric of gesture with self-deprecatingly "excessive awkwardness" and an admission that "all his motions [are] makeshifts." Except in the hand of God, not even gestures can hope to convey specific truth—but that is part of their point, to suggest that nothing must try to communicate such a thing, least of all the language of realist discourse which is crippled by the illusion of its own comprehensibility. This blindness is akin to the blindness of the Raj itself, striving hopelessly and destructively for comprehensive rule, logical knowledge, enduring influence. It is akin to Adela's compulsively blind need to "see" the real India—"only a form of ruling India," (PI, p. 297). And it is akin to a combination of these elements in the trial scene of the novel, in which the quest for forensic exactitude is confounded not by India, nor by Adela's recantation, but by the refusal of language to bear the responsibility—though it is nonetheless deeply implicated—for exactitude, for what did or did not happen in the Marabar Caves, for what does and does not happen in the moral vacuum of empire. Forster's evasions of language form the essential character of *A Passage to India* more than any single device or idea. This is of course a contradiction in terms—a texture of words which evades language—but an intentional one. In its efforts not to perpetuate the essentially imperialist action of imposing a definite cartography of names and labels upon its universe, the text also refuses to allow language the luxury of even the illusion of precision.<sup>52</sup> It opts instead for an imprecise, self-silencing rhetoric of gesture. The direction in which its vision yearns is only ever indicated, never named. And the unattainability of that vision is avowed even as the vision is gestured toward: "the hand stretches out for ever, the lifted knee has the eternity though not the sadness of the grave."

<sup>52</sup> On cartography, see Richards (1993), pp. 11-45.

TWO THINGS need further exploration, here as before: the text's evasions of definite language, and its substitution of gesture in place of language. We have seen this pattern at work in a polyphonic context; now we can begin observing it in the more meditative, elaborative, contemplative context—this motion being yet another expression of the lateral movement outward, Said's "magisterial narrowing of focus" and deepening of scrutiny. The reading of passages from Forster's essays and lectures operated polyphonically; this reading of *A Passage to India* is more like a theme and variations. There are countless examples of "repetition and variation" throughout the book, and they tend to be characterized by attention to some instance where speech or exact description is refused or rendered impossible; also each instance connects to various other incidents and aspects, helping to build the fabric of the text as a whole. There are, furthermore, various prominent motifs, which take on the character of rhetorical effects and function as metonyms for entire emotional and spiritual attitudes in the text. Following the path of any one of them can often seem like wandering on a long trail of diversions; this has the effect of confounding any linear or teleological conceits which might be creeping into a reader's interpretation, or a character's presumptions—it helps disavow any "executive authority" to the text or any act of reading. But as we trace several examples of how a small gesture can wend an apparently aimless path through the book, there will always be the idea of gesture itself to return to: not an interpretative paradigm nor a systematic rhetoric—perhaps something more like a rhythm, an echo.

There is, in fact, a good example in the passage above which leads through other crucial margins of the text. When Aziz makes his unguarded claim that he might have saved himself numerous misfortunes had he become anti-British earlier, Fielding exposes not merely Aziz's *faux-pas* but also the fallibility of his friend's petulant discourse: the words have conveyed the wrong ideas in the worst way. They have expressed a general distaste when only a specific one is felt, and yet they have implied a different specific distaste—for Fielding instead of for Adela. When Aziz appeals to the rhetoric of nationalism to express his sentiments of personal shame, fear, and disappointment he says nothing of what he means. He cloaks with falsity whatever anxieties he may justifiably have, and denies himself access to whatever sympathy he may justifiably deserve and certainly desires. Then, caught in a trap, Aziz extricates himself by closing down this particular discourse, by retreating from language: he makes the far more communicative gesture of changing the subject with an inane remark, itself referring to the diverting gesture—diverting in several senses—of pouring water on Mohammed Latif's face. This, moreover, is further fractured by a

stock-comic Babu tone, another abuse of language: "I say," and "He is so funny when this is done to him asleep." Fielding understands exactly what is going on—more so, the implication is, than if Aziz had remonstrated, stayed on the subject, and attempted to talk his way out of an impossible position. Instead of this attempt at logic where the language of logic is not adequate, there is the gesture of refusing to speak—as the text interprets it: "The remark was not a question but a full stop."

In and of itself, this particular instance of a failure in language and its replacement by gesture is one of the weakest examples of the effect in the book. It seems perversely appropriate—symptomatically illogical—that it should come at a specific point in the text where this gestural method is endorsed. Here the text uses fairly declamatory language to explain itself, but at the same time offers an example so weak it needs to be teased out and scrutinized. That it is not made more obvious means that the mind beholding it is respected, challenged, not imposed upon—and the text is allowed to avoid making pronouncements which might be analogous to the disrespectful impositions of imperialism. Forster's rhetoric here conveys both message and method, in one coherent gesture, and reveals "some of its secrets" in "backwaters and shallows," (AN, p. xvii).

Also, the effect ripples forward and backward in the text to other associations: Fielding's concern for Adela undergoes "development" in Aziz's mind into a plot against himself. This delusory suspicion takes expression in various breakdowns in the normally easy communication between the two friends. Aziz tells how the rumor has emerged that Fielding is courting Adela—"first my name was coupled with her, and now it is yours," (PI, p. 261)—using what Fielding calls "exaggerated phrases" and working himself up to the point of actually believing the scandal. Aziz worries about spies, and when Fielding laughs this off, queries "Do you contradict my last remark?" (PI, p. 262). Fielding tries to get at the heart of Aziz's anxiety with some specific questions but, we are told, "any direct attack threw him out of action." Aziz makes his louche accusation, Fielding is piqued and their discourse becomes hopelessly vexed. Neither is able to say what he wants, and the manner each adopts betrays his anxieties—language breaks down under gesture: "Tangles like this still interrupted their intercourse. A pause in the wrong place, an intonation misunderstood, and a whole conversation went awry," (PI, p. 262-263).

Two years later (as we discussed briefly above in a different context) once everyone has left Chandrapore and Fielding has actually married, he is deprived of any discourse with which to convince Aziz that his wife is not Adela—until he actually meets Aziz

again and is forced to be blunt: "Why have you not answered my letters?" [Fielding] asked, going straight for the point," (PI, p. 291). Aziz answers not with words but with a gesture similar to his mock-Babu phrases from the first scene quoted above: "Aziz sketched a comic salaam; like all Indians, he was skilful in the slighter impertinences. 'I tremble, I obey,' the gesture said, and it was not lost upon Fielding." This version of the "slighter gesture of dissent" takes on a parodic socio-political tone and as such communicates much to Fielding—namely that Aziz is more caught up in his own anxieties than earnest. Conversation continues in a very strained fashion up to the point where Aziz finally realizes his mistake. Even then, his emotion causes his discourse to collapse further: "He trembled, he went purplish gray; he hated the news, hated hearing the name Moore.... 'This is a very useless conversation, I consider'," (PI, p. 292). He then dismisses Fielding in Urdu not English, and departs not so much with Mrs. Moore's name in his ears as with her memory, her echo, in his mind: "It had been an uneasy, uncanny moment in which Mrs Moore's name was mentioned, stirring memories. 'Esmiss Esmoor . . . '—as though she was coming to help him," (PI, p. 293). Her power for him is literally a matter of resonance and rhythm, something between language and gesture—and as such it will eventually help him toward reconciliation with Fielding.

The device of the echo is of course intimately connected to many aspects of the text, and we shall pursue it in due course along the way. Before that, though, I want to point out an interesting refinement on two other motifs associated with Mrs. Moore: water and the wasp. Each of these motifs returns near this scene to great effect—not as a symbol of Mrs. Moore but as an echo of earlier scenes in which she has been active. The scene of the revelation about Fielding being married not to Adela but to Mrs. Moore's daughter occurs in pouring rain near a lake—the rain is consistently referred to by the text, and in fact also contributes to the end of the conversation, its sound and moisture "drowning out" speech. Water has already played a part in conversation between Mrs. Moore and Aziz: the Mosque in which they first meet "contained an ablution-tank of fresh clear water, which was always in motion," (PI, p. 13); this is recalled in the tank in Fielding's house where, during their tea-party, Aziz says, "Mrs Moore! Mrs Moore! You remember the water by our mosque? It comes down and fills this tank—a skillful arrangement of the Emperors," (PI, p. 64). Then this comment provides an occasion for the text to indicate one of its primary attitudes toward the role and character of language—the notion of truth of mood which we discussed above; here we may regard the passage in full:



He was wrong about the water, which no Emperor, however skillful, can cause to gravitate uphill; a depression of some depth together with the whole of Chandrapore lay between the mosque and Fielding's house. Ronny would have pulled him up, Turton would have wanted to pull him up, but restrained himself. Fielding did not even want to pull him up; he had dulled his craving for verbal truth and cared chiefly for truth of mood. As for Miss Quested, she accepted everything Aziz said as true verbally. In her ignorance, she regarded him as "India", and never surmised that his outlook was limited and his method inaccurate, and that no one is India. (PI, p. 64-65)

The context of water—which suggests flow, aimlessness, and connection—helps convey and demonstrate the operation of the text as a whole, in that the interplay of indirection and impressionism achieved by the recurrent device of water is both method and message.

The associations between mentions of a wasp are more complex and connect to another key concern of the text: namely the invitation motif which we shall discuss in greater detail below. Mrs. Moore prepares for bed on her first day in Chandrapore, the day on which she has met Aziz in the mosque: "Going to hang up her cloak, she found that the tip of the peg was occupied by a small wasp.... 'Pretty dear,' said Mrs Moore to the wasp. He did not wake, but her voice floated out, to swell the night's uneasiness," (PI, p. 29). Then, towards the end of the book, Godbole is in the religious ecstasy in which he and his fellow worshipers "loved all men, the whole universe, and scraps of their past, tiny splinters of detail, emerged for a moment into the universal warmth," (PI, p. 276). He remembers Mrs. Moore, who "happened to occur among the throng of soliciting images," and recalls "a wasp seen he forgot where, perhaps on a stone. He loved the wasp equally." As he contemplates these two "splinters" he tries to "impel" them "to that place where completeness can be found," in which endeavor he is "imitating God." Encouraged in his efforts he thinks: "and the stone where the wasp clung—could he . . . no, he could not, he had been wrong to attempt the stone, logic and conscious effort had seduced," (PI, p. 277). There is no previous mention of a stone in the text—no previous pulse with which to set up a rhythm. Forcing the effect through conscious effort and logic, here seen as a species of definition akin to language, is shown to be not only inadequate but counterproductive to the desired ecstasy and communion of both the mystical and the textual states. Also, the image refers to an earlier scene in which different sorts of religious men, Christian missionaries, try to decide whether God's salvation extends to the wasp, and beyond it to the bacteria and mud; this is a scene which helps expand the invitation motif, and connects it with the desire for community in a way itself suggestive of the final scene of



the whole novel: "All invitations must proceed from heaven perhaps; perhaps it is futile for men to initiate their own unity, they do but widen the gulfs between them by the attempt," (PI, p. 32). A deliberate attempt to include all matter in salvation "is going too far." "We must exclude something from our gathering, or we shall be left with nothing." This in turn is an anticipation of the darker revelation of nothingness which Mrs. Moore undergoes in the caves: "Pathos, piety, courage—they exist, but are identical, and so is filth. Everything exists, nothing has value," (PI, p. 140). Even her friendship with Aziz decays beyond articulability, "the affectionate and sincere words that she had spoken to him seemed no longer hers but the air's." From the simple fact that Godbole cannot get a stone into his meditations one follows a path of association up to that combined awareness and humility which can only be expressed in "Ouboum".

The phrases at play here are so interlockingly similar—Mrs. Moore's words to the wasp floating out on the night, and her words being no longer hers but the air's; the collapse of categories, taxonomical and emotional alike, leave one with "nothing". And in each case, it has not been some sublime force lurking in the Marabar Caves or inherent in Godbole's access to Brahman which has so compromised language and peace of mind—rather it has been the actual act of trying with logic and language to impel such unity as cannot exist on this earth, not yet, not here. The reaction to this awareness can be either "uneasiness," in the case of the Christian missionaries, or some sort of existential nausea or vertigo in the case of the silenced Mrs. Moore, or an approach toward equanimity in the ability to accept the aporia in the case of Godbole—or, encompassing all of these, a reaction to this awareness can be that of the novelist composing his text with such rhythms and devices, like that of the wasp, which constitute a gesture to work subtly against it.

Godbole is content not to be able to express anything coherently—even to the point of erring in the direction of a comic inscrutability. He is furthermore prone to conveying this awareness through contingent gesture: after his failure to impel the stone towards completeness, he "discovers" himself dancing upon a carpet, the dance being an acknowledgment of the ecstatic release that can come with a simultaneous awareness of unity with God and of mankind's inability to achieve it, or to represent it in language. Godbole will only go so far as to articulate a desire for unity, and a sense of his own contingent relation to it. He recalls the Song of the Milkmaidens to Krishna—which is another detail we shall discuss in the context of the invitation motif—and its refrain of "Come, come, come, come." On this note of deferred desire, and with

allusive gestures toward wasp and water, the chapter ends: "This was all he could do. How inadequate! But each according to his own small capacities, and he knew that his own were small. 'One old Englishwoman and one little, little wasp,' he thought, as he stepped out of the temple into the gray of a pouring wet morning. 'It does not seem much, still, it is more than I am myself,'" (PI, p. 281). In fact, it is the rhetorical pattern of the text as a whole.

THE WASP MOTIF has been explored by Peter Burra, E. K. Brown, and others as a species of textual rhythm.<sup>53</sup> In his 1957 "Prefatory Note" to the Everyman Edition of *Passage*, Forster commented that his main purpose in the novel had been best divined by Peter Burra, whose essay was also given as an introduction to that edition. "Burra saw exactly what I was trying to do.... It is unusual to be understood," (PI, appendix A, p. 313). In an earlier prefatory note (1942) Forster had been particularly impressed that Burra had noticed the wasp. Burra's interest in the device also connects to modernism. He quotes the two passages and notes the image of the wasp in Godbole's "wandering thoughts which, with extraordinary suggestiveness, calls us back to that scene," (PI, appendix B, p. 320). Just above this he has commented, "Mr Forster nowhere uses symbols as Mrs Woolf does, translating an inarticulate idea into an image; but he constantly uses images to suggest, by association, more than they themselves signify," (PI, appendix B, p. 320). This signification occurs within the text only—it does not refer to some universal significance of wasps—which is why the mechanism is more gestural than symbolic.

Another indication of this signification, as opposed to symbolism, comes when a motif is altered in some way—still associated with the basic form, still alluding to other scenes and ideas, but significantly different: "repetition plus variation." Mrs. Moore's wasp, for example, metamorphoses into a swarm of bees to indicate the arrival of her son and faint echo, Ralph Moore. Aziz first sees Ralph—thinking he is a Mr. Quested—as the young man is being stung by bees. The scene is charged with subtle details and shifts which associate it in a skewed relationship with the scene in which Aziz and Mrs. Moore first meet; it occurs outside a shrine, instead of in a mosque, water is falling from the sky as rain instead of flowing in the tank, and there are bees instead of wasps. Later, when Aziz visits Ralph to treat his stings, the conversation begins with similar *malentendus* to those in the earlier scene. Ralph looks older than

<sup>53</sup> Burra (1934); Brown (1950); Werry (1958).

his years until he comes into the light of a lamp, while Mrs. Moore had looked younger until she stood in the light of the moon; Aziz is initially outraged on vaguely religious and racial lines in each scene, and while in the first scene he proclaims his Indianness with pride and passion, in the latter he dissembles like a coward in a falsely fractured language: "State doctor, ridden over to inquire, very little English" (PI, p. 299); Ralph's greets Aziz with, "Oh, oh," (PI, p. 298), just as his mother had first said "Oh! Oh!" (PI, p. 14).

This echoing of Mrs. Moore in her son is "repetition plus variation." It is not a pattern, it is a developing rhythm: a bee substituted for a wasp impels the text forward without insisting on too rigid a correspondence between characters and scenes which must be allowed to exist in their own right. The use and alterations to the gestures together constitute an even more effective strategy for resisting the petrification of the language of the text as a whole—they amount to a gesture of subtle transgression upon the constraints of language which is not destructive of the essentially linguistic fabric of the text. They are not the "voice" of resistance, or alterity, or any other aspect of an incipient postcolonialism—rather they are transgressions within the counterpoint of devices and they make the text more vital. Together they comprise a gesture beyond the fractured present to some unity beyond, an appeal not a promise, a passage which amounts to a precursor.

### INTERTWINED MOTIFS OF HAND-INVITATION-RAPE

THERE ARE MANY of these rhythmic devices in the text. The wasp and water motifs we have already seen. Other motifs, which we have approached several times above, are worth regarding in the larger context of gesture, and lead to issues of how the text conveys its essential interest in the inarticulable. These motifs are the motif of the hand and the double motif of invitation/rape.

Intertwined as they are with each other and with the idea of the inarticulable, they also tend to become intertwined with notions and images of gesture and appeal, so that it is difficult to discuss any one of these crucial ideas systematically or separately from the others. The hand motif, for example, is tied to the wasp and water motifs when Aziz is treating Ralph's bee-stings and is accused of having "unkind hands," (PI, p. 299)—though this enrages Aziz at first, it reminds him of Mrs. Moore, makes him friendlier, and culminates in his inviting Ralph to join him on the water in a boat; there they collide with Fielding and Stella and with a religious festival and capsize. The scene is like a comical repetition-plus-variation of the violent crisis of the caves, an expiation or redemption and a "climax, as far as India admits of one," (PI, p. 305). The end of the sequence of motifs is the end of the chapter, and the first sentence of the next—"Friends again, yet aware that they would meet no more," (PI, p. 307)—initiates the final scene of the novel and the peculiarly deferred utopia which the rhetoric has all along gestured toward, desired, invited.

This is only one example of how the various motifs intertwine, moving from a basic detail to the general vision of the text. In any given scene, one motif or idea will be more prominent than the others—but in the passages we shall examine below they are all at play, polyphonically, transgressing and elaborating upon each other. Furthermore, these specific motifs are not merely accidental: they function as vehicles for the themes and ideas of the narrative, and also evoke and enact the methodology by which those themes are understood to have meaning. Often sequences of allusions involving these motifs are initiated by mention of the echo which Adela experiences as a consequence of her imagined rape in the Caves; equally often allusions originate with mention of a hand, which can after all be understood as essentially gestural in its connotations—each motif invites associations with a discourse similarly subversive of rational or conventional language, valorizing the notion of inarticulable appeal. In such a way do the motifs work together both thematically and methodologically.

We have already seen several instances of hand imagery in our discussions of gesture—an obvious correspondence—but the first conspicuous occurrence of a hand in the novel is gentle, and only obliquely suggests the other motifs. Still, each association is nonetheless powerfully present in the exordium of Chapter One which ends with this rhetorically seductive gesture: “League after league the earth lies flat, heaves a little, is flat again. Only in the south, where a group of fists and fingers are thrust up through the soil, is the endless expanse interrupted. These fists and fingers are the Marabar Hills, containing the extraordinary caves,” (PI, p. 4). This strikes something of a keynote—setting the tones for contingency and intrusion, which are dominant motifs in the text. The sense of geology thrusting up from flatness connects with the rocks which rise out of the earth to separate Aziz and Fielding in the final scene and form a delicate frame for an otherwise expanding narrative. More relevant to the motifs we are exploring, the image of “fists and fingers” forces a hand into the text from the start, and resonates with later uses of gesture, reaching out, and pointing. Tantalizingly presented, the caves function as an invitation into the text; also the use of the word “thrust” connotes something of the context of rape and violence with which the caves will be associated. Finally, this short opening chapter has a structural and tonal parallel in the short opening chapter of Section II, “Caves”. There in Chapter 12 the caves are presented as the great vacuum through which language and definitive logic will escape as the text advances: “Nothing, nothing attaches to them, and their reputation—for they have one—does not depend on human speech,” (PI, p. 117). Thus from the image of the hand so present at the opening, the text elaborates toward its tantalizing meditations on the loss of language. In essence, the way to approach this heart of darkness is through a process of association similar to the one by which the text approaches the same darkness without succumbing in horror to its silences.

The most horrifying and potentially silencing aspect of the text is the crisis which occurs in the Marabar Caves. Here the notion of appeal, of invitation, and of its essential connection to physical and sexual violence is at the center of the plot and is the major trope upon which imperialism, as Forster conceives it, is based. The expression of rape, defined only as a negative vision, is at the center of *A Passage to India*—or rather, since it does not happen specifically, emphasizes that no single thing or act or idea is at the center, that there is no center or language to describe it, nothing but itself. Adela tries to see India and to label it—despite consistent warnings that such a thing is impossible and in any case insulting. Mrs. Moore, on the other hand, has gentler objectives. She at least knows that “adventures do occur, but not punctually” (PI, p.



20), which is to say, not upon invitation. Adela is disappointed in India and by India because she has not learned that "life never gives us what we want at the moment we consider appropriate." Consider the disastrous "Bridge Party" of Chapter 5, in which Indians are invited to mingle at the Club. It is an unpleasant, artificial affair for everybody: Adela is forced to deal with Indians on English terms, and to confront them rather than be intimate with them: "Miss Quested now had her desired opportunity; friendly Indians were before her, and she tried to make them talk, but she failed, she strove in vain against the echoing walls of their civility," (PI, p. 37). Such a sentence clearly prefigures the echo of the caves, and the echo in Adela's head after the expedition to the caves. When India finally presents itself to her—or rather, when she is finally brought up against the awareness of her presence in India—she desperately tries one last trick to make a connection, and gets it all muddled. Rather than realizing what England has done to India, she imagines herself to have been raped by an Indian: she asks Aziz provocative questions about love and holds his hand (PI, p. 143), creating an atmosphere in which her basic gestures seem to be an invitation of some sort to him. But the main point is that India withholds; no definite thing happens in the Marabar Caves. No expression of connection is possible on these terms of Adela's, which perpetuate all that is imbalanced in the imperial power-ratio between cultures—and so nothing happens.

Adela does not specifically invite whatever happens to her in the caves, but in their connections to other operative motifs her thoughts and actions suggest that she is subconsciously looking for some sort of a relationship with India, which is then frustrated. In a minor way, the idea is suggested by one overt comment in the text: Aziz, when asked by Fielding to compose an apology for Adela to sign, dictates coarsely, "'Dear Dr Aziz, I wish you had come into the cave; I am an awful old hag, and it is my last chance,'" (PI, p. 240). More to the point, the motif of invitation and invitation-not-responded-to circulates throughout the text: it connects the various sections together, and connects muddles with mysteries, and connects the message of the text with its method—helping at once to suggest and defy interpretation.<sup>54</sup> Adela and Mrs. Moore are invited by an Indian family, the Bhattacharyas, to visit their house, but the promised carriage never comes to collect them. This occasions Adela's comment, "I do so hate mysteries," to which Mrs. Moore responds, "I like mysteries but I rather dislike muddles." Into the middle of all this jumps Aziz with a rash

<sup>54</sup> See Colmer, in Das and Beer (1979), pp. 117-128, p. 128: "At the end of the novel we realize that true wisdom comes from acceptance of absence as well as presence."

invitation: "There'll be no muddle when you come to visit me.... Mrs Moore and everyone—I invite you all—oh, please," (PI, p. 62). Eventually, of course, this invitation expands into the expedition to the caves, and all that that entails. Godbole, who sees everything happening, and in his mysterious way is suspicious of it, is nonetheless unable to warn against it: when asked to describe the caves he says it will be a great pleasure to do so, and then forgoes the pleasure—not for any definite reason, "It was rather that a power he couldn't control capriciously silenced his mind," (PI, p. 68). Instead Godbole communicates in ways which are more familiar to him, but entirely mysterious, if endearing, to the others. He sings the Song of the Milkmaidens, described as "the song of an unknown bird," (PI, p. 72), and offers this odd gloss:

"It was a religious song. I placed myself in the position of a milkmaid. I say to Shri Krishna: 'Come! Come to me only.' The God refuses to come. I grow humble and say: 'Do not come to me only. Multiply yourself into a hundred Krishnas, and let one go to each of my hundred companions....' He refuses to come. This is repeated several times...."

"But He comes in some other song, I hope?" said Mrs Moore gently.

"Oh no, He refuses to come," repeated Godbole.... "I say to Him, Come, come, come, come, come, come. He neglects to come." (PI, p. 72)

The passage ends illustratively: "There was a moment of absolute silence. No ripple disturbed the water, no leaf stirred,"—and nothing happened in the Marabar Caves. Despite a milkmaid's insistent invitation, even on behalf of all her friends, the truth is not revealed, nor is it articulable—universal love or community of culture do not reveal themselves in the Marabar Caves, any more than does the carnal love which is in Adela's mind at the time: as Mrs. Moore intones and later thinks in two of her more sibylline moments, "Love in a church, love in a cave, as if there is the least difference!...—boum, it amounts to the same," (PI, pp. 192, 198). Love, ravishment, invitation, rape, the yoking together of absolute differences, the attempt to articulate such things—no sublime is confounding the text; it simply neglects to come.

Another area in which the various motifs intertwine and elaborate upon each other is the odd sequence of events comprising chapter 8. Adela and Mrs. Moore have been fetched away by Ronny from the tea-party with Fielding, Aziz, and Godbole. Adela realizes she cannot marry Ronny, largely because she feels she cannot conform to Anglo-Indian mores, although she articulates no explanation and he asks no questions. Into their *tête-à-tête* intrudes the Nawab Bahadur, who invites them to come for a ride in his car. This is a familiar device—in *Howards End* Forster had used a car to make unstable emotional situations even more unstable: Aunt Juley and Charles Wilcox argue in one over Helen and Paul (HE, ch. 3, pp. 13-19), Margaret jumps out of one to

protest a moment of crassness (HE, ch. 25, p. 211). Here in *Passage* a car allows Forster to introduce a minatory and inexplicable element into the text, just as Adela and Ronny think they have rendered their own emotional situation comfortably clear-cut. First the scenery is made to evoke the mood of disappointment, and to allude to the Song of the Milkmaidens and its attendant suggestions of appeal and frustration:

The car made a burring noise and rushed along a chausée that ran upon an embankment above melancholy fields. Trees of a poor quality bordered the road, indeed the whole scene was inferior, and suggested that the countryside was too vast to admit of excellence. In vain did each item in it call out, "Come, come." There was not enough god to go round. (PI, p. 79)

Underlying the obvious association between the deferred desire of Krishna and the milkmaidens and the dissipated nuptials of Ronny and Adela is a larger texture of contingency in which it is understood any unity would be illusory, "spurious":

Her hand touched his, owing to a jolt, and one of the thrills so frequent in the animal kingdom passed between them, and announced that all their difficulties were only a lovers' quarrel. Each was too proud to increase the pressure, but neither withdrew it, and a spurious unity descended on them, as local and temporary as the gleam that inhabits a firefly. (PI, p. 79-80).<sup>55</sup>

India is not to blame for this dullness, nor is the "undeveloped" English heart (AH, p. 15)<sup>56</sup>—rather Forster seems to be implying that the human strives too much to be the arbiter of its own universe, even though it is just another member of the animal kingdom prone to interpret such physical thrills which pass through it as being more significant than they are. Were it more sensitive to its own connections with its environment, the human would not press so caustically upon that environment—with motor cars and empires and interpretations.

<sup>55</sup> Another sequence of hand devices is oriented around spurious unities, which are similarly dispersed, and which also end prosaically: first, Adela, Fielding, and Hamidullah, representing three counter-posed forces in the plot immediately after the trial, talk of what Adela has done, (PI, p. 231): "A great deal has been broken, more than will ever be mended," said [Hamidullah]. "Still, there should be some way of transporting this lady back to the Civil Lines. The resources of civilization are numerous." He spoke without looking at Miss Quested, and he ignored the slight movement she made toward him with her hand." Shortly after this, Adela and Fielding make their cordial goodbye in a passage quoted earlier which describes the awkward scene as being like "dwarfs shaking hands." This, then, is echoed (PI, p. 255-6) when the Deputy Magistrate Das, judge in the trial and brother-in-law of Bhattacharyas who had invited Adela and Mrs. Moore to their home but never sent a carriage for them, invites Aziz to submit a poem to his multicultural literary journal; Aziz consents, and seals the agreement in an odd prefiguration of his final scene with Fielding: "They shook hands, in a half-embrace that typified the entente. Between people of distant climes there is always the possibility of romance, but the various branches of Indians know too much about each other to surmount the unknowable easily. The approach is prosaic."

<sup>56</sup> "Notes on the English Character," (AH, p. 13-26).

As if provoked by such pressure, the text more or less literally derails these illusions with a scene which functions as a slight prolepsis to the events surrounding the Marabar Caves. An unidentifiable hairy animal charges the car and runs it off the road, and the accident enforces the spurious unity between the two English people by allowing them access to behavior patterns inherited from the facile heroic tradition in imperial culture—"They forgot their abortive personal relationship, and felt adventurous as they muddled about in the dust," (PI, p. 81). The events, however, violently disrupt the Nawab's peace of mind; to each futile attempt to identify the animal as goat, buffalo, hyena, he responds with "an angry irony and a gesture at the night." The whole incident is bizarrely uncanny, though there is the suggestion of violence nothing much happens, and in the face of the unknown an artificial racial stratification supplants any logical discourse between humans—all of which again occurs in an amplified and more frightening fashion after the expedition to the Caves.

Something of an explanation for the Nawab's anxiety is given later at the end of the chapter. Here the diction of the text oscillates between the Nawab's specific perspective and that of an omniscient author. The effect is destabilizing and symptomatic of the "unspeakable," uncanny quality of the events and their effect on the characters;<sup>57</sup> even the most analytical and skeptical reader will be disquieted by the shifting perspective and the language in general. Furthermore, the rhetoric easily associates race and language with the larger context of the book's desire for communication between England and India:

Nine years previously when first he had had a car, he had driven it over a drunken man and killed him, and the man had been waiting for him ever since. The Nawab Bahadur was innocent before God and the Law, he had paid double the compensation necessary; but it was no use, the man continued to wait in an unspeakable form, close to the scene of his death. None of the English people knew of this, nor did the chauffeur; it was a racial secret communicable more by blood than speech. (PI, p. 90)

The idea that this is a racial secret not easily communicable by speech—is this the Nawab's or Forster's? If it is the Nawab's then Forster can again be excused from endorsing the Liberal Orientalist sublime which tends to render discourse between races hopelessly vexed, and in focusing its principal attention on racial difference obfuscates any tendency toward a more polyphonic conception of culture. As much as this interpretation might be desired, it seems difficult to decide upon and its opposite could be true, that the opinions are Forster's own. While it is difficult to believe the Nawab's

<sup>57</sup> Freud (1919), p. 214, figures the uncanny as an anxiety in which "the most frightening element can be shown to be something repressed which recurs."



story as literally as he himself does, we have no other explanation for what happened. But the Nawab's definite interpretation is not counterposed to some other definite interpretation, and is instead balanced with further proliferations, echoes, of the uncanny. These attach not to "credulous" Indians but to "educated" English people: what did happen to Adela in the caves? what is her echo? how did Mrs. Moore know so much without having seen anything? The best explanations anyone can offer for these questions are unsatisfactory: perhaps "the guide" (PI, p. 230) attacked Adela; her echo is put down to "a sort of sadness . . . no, nothing as solid as sadness: living at half pressure expresses it best," (PI, p. 228); Mrs. Moore's sensitivity is ascribed in a lunatic moment to "telepathy": "The pert, meagre word fell to the ground. Telepathy? What an explanation! Better withdraw it, and Adela did so," (PI, p. 251). Mrs. Moore believes in ghosts; that is her word for the strange animal which ran into the car, except she barely speaks it: "But the idea of a ghost scarcely passed her lips. The young people did not take it up, being occupied with their own outlooks, and deprived of support it perished, or was reabsorbed into the part of the mind that seldom speaks," (PI, p. 88). The biggest correspondence is with Mrs. Moore's crisis after her experience of the caves: this is to be understood not as an inability to process India or comment upon it, but as a nausea concomitant upon simultaneous loss of faith and loss of language. The point is that there are no answers to such questions—irrespective of race or place, people can get to the "end of their spiritual tethers" (PI, p. 251), and local culture, tradition, and history will determine what explanations they resort to for comfort in the fear and vertigo which ensue. In any case, these details are incidental—to mistake them as essential is not only false, it is immoral, being tantamount to the accusations of rape leveled at an innocent man.

All this is summed up in words which essentially undermine any remaining illusions cherished by the human critical faculty that such things as definitive knowledge of the truth are attainable on this earth: "Were there worlds beyond which they could never touch, or did all that is possible enter their consciousness? They could not tell. They only realized that their outlook was more or less similar, and found in this a satisfaction. Perhaps life is a mystery, not a muddle; they could not tell. Perhaps the hundred Indias which fuss and squabble so tiresomely are one, and the universe they mirror is one. They had not the apparatus for judging," (PI, p. 251). Forster's text implies that any human outlook—Indian, English—is essentially similar to any other; one must find in that a satisfaction to strive eternally together after the mysteries of the universe, not squabble endlessly over the muddles caused by our inadequate



ability to interpret it. As long as that apparatus is recognized as limited, then it functions more or less within its supportable parameters, and is not made to bear too heavy a load. An overly definitive use of language, a cultural imagining which can drive one nation to dominate others, even a critical faculty which insists too stringently on its own methodological authority—all are species of this overloaded apparatus. Forster's text strives to disavow each claim to the truth, and to avoid substituting any pretension of its own it operates through these myriad "slighter gestures of dissent." The text distributes throughout itself the hundred voices of an appeal, not easily communicable by language, to a god who will not come but who is nonetheless understood to be there, unnamable.

## THE INARTICULABLE

IN THIS WAY does one see yet again how an exploration of the intertwining motifs of a specific scene can lead to a statement of the methodology and meaning of the text as a whole. The scene in the Nawab Bahadur's car seems to prefigure the events of the Marabar Caves for basically this reason. Turning now to these events, we see an increase of emphasis on the notion of the inarticulable—emanating initially from the first presentation of the Caves, as “unspeakable” things which are “readily described” but “difficult to discuss,” (PI, pp. 116-118). The expedition to the caves is certainly the center of the plot, though much of its significance comes from this diaphanously dispersed operation of hand, invitation, and rape motifs, and the ways these are involved in the text's evasions of language.

The conversation between Aziz, Adela, and Mrs. Moore before they enter the caves contains at least one moment notable in this context. The party are discussing the Emperor Akbar and his attempts to proselytize a new religion throughout India. Aziz comments, with more than usual sensitivity, “Nothing embraces the whole of India, nothing, nothing, and that was Akbar's mistake,” (PI, p. 136).<sup>58</sup> Adela here takes up the expected role, always assigned to some Forster character or another, of insisting too much on the devices and desires of a totalizing instinct—and in this case the instinct is seen ironically and unwittingly to endorse imperialism: “I hope you're not right. There will have to be something universal in this country—I don't say religion, for I'm not religious, but something, or how else are barriers to be broken down?” In such a conception, the breaking down of barriers would amount to an obliteration of local distinction, not a multicultural society but a monolithic one. Thus the next comment, which comes from the voice of the text itself, seems highly ironic: “She was only recommending the universal brotherhood he sometimes dreamed of, but as soon as it was put into prose it became untrue.” The irony is that Aziz and Adela each have different but similarly insufficient attitudes toward the universal—they have not the apparatus for judging anything legitimately wider than their respective local experiences. Therefore any expression of their attitudes, ideas, or even dreams exposes their limitations. In this case, direct language conveys more than its speaker intends; the indirect irony inherent in the words amounts to a gesture from the mind behind the

<sup>58</sup> Contrast Cronin (1989), p. 4: “The Indian novel, the novel that tries to encapsulate the whole of Indian reality can, as yet, only be written in English.”

text which implies that it prefers not to attempt to articulate such ideas. It is challenging enough to attempt to convey all this in English, the language of the imperial and metropolitan center—but calling attention to the ironic margins of that language itself is one way of subverting yet another totalizing tendency.

Adela might have been one to understand this—but the closer she comes to allying herself with Anglo-India the less she is able to articulate it. And note, it is not India which vexes her, but being English in India—a distinction insisted upon in the passage below, particularly by Mrs. Moore's one contribution to it. Adela's liminality is exemplified in the rest of the exchange:

"Mrs Moore, may I put our difficulty to Dr Aziz—I mean our Anglo-Indian one?"

"It is your difficulty, not mine, my dear."

"Ah, that's true. Well, by marrying Mr Heaslop I shall become what is known as an Anglo-Indian."

He held up his hand in protest. "Impossible. Take back such a terrible remark."

"But I shall. It is inevitable. I can't avoid the label. What I do hope to avoid is the mentality. Women like—" She stopped, not quite liking to mention names; she would boldly have said "Mrs Turton and Mrs Callendar" a fortnight ago. (PI, p. 137)

Her involvement with this "mentality" is clearly already beginning, as is evidenced by what she cannot say. Aziz never really answers her, only offering a polite remark that she is unlike the others and will never be rude. When she offers the oft-repeated idea that "we all get rude after a year" he flashes indignantly "for she had spoken the truth." Again—is this some sublime truth as Forster understands it? Perhaps, perhaps not; his personal opinions might have aligned with this cliché,<sup>59</sup> but there is an irony in the text insofar as the remark is itself considered "an insult in these particular circumstances": Adela does not even need a year to grow so insensitive as to suggest that the environment has some sort of sublimely malignant effect on English women. It is she who is perpetuating the Orientalism, he who is resisting it with barely controlled violence—and the text which is observing both actions, allowing each an equal voice and endorsing or denouncing neither.

Into this texture of ironic detachment, a final comment escalates the moment to a vaster scale, again alludes to the coming disaster of the Marabar and the passing trope of deferred desire in the Song of the Milkmaidens, and involves a hand:

He recovered himself at once and laughed, but her error broke up their conversation—their civilization it had almost been—which scattered like the petals of a desert flower, and left them in the middle of the hills. "Come along," he said, holding out a hand to each. They got up a little reluctantly, and addressed themselves to sightseeing. (PI, p. 137)

<sup>59</sup> See "Three Countries," in (HD, pp. 297): "The manners of [the British] women folk could be ghastly."

Adela's speech has collapsed the desired unity between them: the "civilization it had almost been", and the reference to "hills" which we know contain caves, the word "come", and Aziz's proffered hand all evoke an understanding of how inevitable it is that such a desire be scattered. It is the inexorable tendency of these motifs toward the events of the caves which contributes toward this sense of inevitability—a specifically local and rhetorical sublimity, rather than a general Indian one, or an Orientalist resignation or terror in the face of some Indian inscrutability. This motivic drive, this gestural sublime, not any other ideological agency, is the compelling force of the text.

At this point the characters enter a cave and Mrs. Moore has her crisis. Every nuance in the rhetoric of the following passage emphasizes a loss of language, and the high irony of that situation is communicated underneath or around language—in the margins of language:

She took out her writing-pad and began, "Dear Stella, Dear Ralph," then stopped, and looked at the queer valley and their feeble invasion of it. Even the elephant had become a nobody. Her eye rose from it to the entrance tunnel. No, she did not wish to repeat that experience. The more she thought over it, the more disagreeable and frightening it became. She minded it much more now than at the time. The crush and the smells she could forget, but the echo began in some indescribable way to undermine her hold on life. Coming at a moment when she chanced to be fatigued, it had managed to murmur: "Pathos, piety, courage—they exist, but are identical, and so is filth. Everything exists, nothing has value." If one had spoken vileness in that place, or quoted lofty poetry, the comment would have been the same—"ou-boum". If one had spoken with the tongues of angels and pleaded for all the unhappiness and misunderstanding in the world, past, present, and to come, for all the misery men must undergo whatever their opinion and position, and however much they dodge or bluff—it would amount to the same, the serpent would descend and return to the ceiling. Devils are of the North, and poems can be written about them, but no one could romanticize the Marabar, because it robbed infinity and eternity of their vastness, the only quality that accommodates them to mankind.

She tried to go on with her letter, reminding herself that she was only an elderly woman who had got up too early in the morning and journeyed too far, that the despair creeping over her was merely her despair, her personal weakness, and that even if she got a sunstroke and went mad the rest of the world would go on. But suddenly, at the edge of her mind, Religion appeared, poor little talkative Christianity, and she knew that all its divine words from "Let there be light" to "It is finished" only amounted to "boum". Then she was terrified over an area larger than usual; the universe, never comprehensible to her intellect, offered no repose to her soul, the mood of the last two months took definite form at last, and she realized that she didn't want to write to her children, didn't want to communicate with anyone, not even with God. She sat motionless with horror, and, when old Mohammed Latif came up to her, thought he would notice a difference. For a time she thought, "I am going to be ill," to comfort herself, then she surrendered to the vision. She lost all interest, even in Aziz, and the affectionate and sincere words that she had spoken to him seemed no longer hers but the air's. (PI, p. 140-141)

Mrs. Moore is stunned by the malevolent featurelessness of the experience, by the echo: "'Boum' is the sound as far as the human alphabet can express it, or 'bou-oum',

or 'ou-boum'—utterly dull," (PI, p. 138-9). After extricating herself and after Aziz and Adela go on to another cave without her, she tries to accommodate the experience but simply cannot. In a passage remarkable for its efficient rhetoric of evasion, her crisis takes on the form of a total loss of language. Her thoughts about the experience and the passage presenting them all but announce themselves as an allegory of the entire imperial experience of the British in India. This is the text's indirect way of turning against a whole social and political endeavor without antagonizing it, and of pointing to the utter annihilation of human discourse which it has entailed. Also, this indicates how subsequent reflection on and exposure of suppressed culpability through the mechanism of the uncanny have rendered guilt even more horrifying—in the caves one encounters the abuses of imperialism; their subsequent echo figures the ineradicable guilt which attaches to such abuses. At the outset of the passage Mrs. Moore's gaze is shown regarding the whole imperial experiment with despair, and failing to comment upon it; at the end her voice and her dream of community again float out to the general air, like her words to the wasp, to be taken up by whomever is better equipped to apprehend them. Here, more than anywhere, the text's elusive and allusive strategies meet the challenge of expressing in prose the idea that imperialism has shut down the power of realist and sentimental prose to express. Mrs. Moore's inconsequential experience, with its reverberating consequences throughout the text, constitutes a most resonant "slight gesture of dissent" against a whole rhetorical and political tradition—and as such prepares the way for succeeding, postcolonial critical and creative efforts of similar intention and effect.

There are many more examples in Mrs. Moore's case of the loss of language, followed by her metamorphosis first into a figure for that lost language, and then into rhythmic variation as memory, echo, motif—all prefigured in this passage. After this, after her experience with the Marabar, her language is petulant to the point of obfuscation and ultimately silence: asked to comment on Adela's echo she snaps, "Say, say, say . . . as if anything can be said! I have spent my life in saying or in listening to sayings; I have listened too much. It is time I was left in peace.... And all this rubbish about love, love in a church, love in a cave, as if there is the least difference, and I held up from my business over such trifles!" (PI, p. 190-2). Ronny's response to this is symptomatic of the inability of imperialism to confront the arbitrariness at its own heart: "What do you want?" he said exasperated. 'Can you state in simple language? If so, do'." The whole point is that she cannot, and instead makes the silencing gesture of



asking for her patience cards.<sup>60</sup> After she departs from the room, she leaves behind an impression of having expressed an opinion about Aziz: Adela half-heartedly insists she has heard Mrs. Moore say he is innocent, but when Ronny does not agree, she comments: "When her voice dropped she said it—towards the end, when she talked about love—love—I couldn't follow, but just then she said: 'Dr Aziz never did it.'" 'Those words?' 'The idea more than the words'," (PI, p. 194). In this Mrs. Moore is beginning to metamorphose into her own unspoken words. On her way out of India the text reports her musings in a notably similar diction: "In the twilight of the double vision a spiritual muddledom is set up for which no high-sounding words can be found; we can neither act nor refrain from action, we can neither ignore nor respect Infinity," (PI, p. 198).<sup>61</sup> Once she actually leaves India she continues to haunt the narrative first as a rallying cry for the defense of Aziz, then as a local deity Esmiss Esmoor. She becomes a memory, then a quite literal echo; finally, when she is associated with the wasp in Godbole's perceiving mind, she becomes inarticulable as pure rhetorical device, gesture, sound, allusion, air.

<sup>60</sup> A student working on the uses of color in Forster recently pointed out how the game of patience is played by placing black and red playing cards on top of each other alternately, mingling them all together; this is significant if one recalls that "black" Indians often refer to the English not as white but as red: Ronny, for example, is the "red-nosed boy", Adela's face is often flushed red. Thanks to Monika Gorecka for revealing this morsel.

<sup>61</sup> See also Forster, "Hymn Before Action" in (AH, pp. 364-66), on passages in the Bhagavad-Gita concerned with "how to harmonize the needs of this life with the eternal truth" and with the wages of worldly action: "It is impossible to inflict damage without receiving it."

“HOW CAN IT BE EXPRESSED IN ANYTHING BUT ITSELF?”

UNANSWERED QUESTIONS REMAIN, hovering over all these observations. *Why* does the text continually vex its own use of language, and substitute a discourse of gesture instead? Now that we have examined some of the subtler ways in which this mechanism operates within the text—the involuted details of *how* Forster’s rhetoric operates—we must approach this difficult question of why he has employed it.

Why, for example, the device of the Caves? Except for the Marabar Caves—and they advance and retreat as the text unfolds—*A Passage to India* might not seem exceptional. But the caves emerge at and as the margins of the novel, simultaneously infinite and enclosed, vastly suggestive and uninterpretable. The novel lies beyond its own margins—so too, as its boums and echoes seem to suggest, does any rhetoric or genre with which we might attempt to represent such inarticulable notions as love, race, intimacy, India. Furthermore, all the attendant frustrations of failing to apprehend these things in language affect the text in their turn. The novel generates its own peculiar pressures, at once stabilizing and defining, upon the novel form itself. These pressures and their reverberations are as inconclusively transformative for the history of English Indian literature as Adela’s experience of the Marabar Caves is for the people of Chandrapore. The text—from its beginning keynote of contingency to its ending echo of deferred desire—is a resonant vacancy in the trajectory of rhetorical ideas flowing away from realism, through modernism, and beyond: a passage to postcolonialism. At its most essential and elusive levels it cries continually ‘Come, come’ and answers itself ‘Not yet, not here’. It is at once precursor and precaution—and evokes the awkward understanding that so much which we strive to communicate cannot be expressed in anything but itself.<sup>62</sup>

The question of why Forster uses the devices he does is probably unanswerable. From such a situation we must extrapolate a working interpretation, always remembering that we are engaged in a process, not a paradigm. If anything, this itself may be the inspiration which this aspect of the text is attempting to convey; whether it has immediate relevance to the changing socio-political situation of the British in India, to the role of modernism and the novel in the cultural dimensions of that situation, or to the embryonic development of a general postcolonial sensibility—each of these issues is

<sup>62</sup> Stone (1966), p. 364 (with Stone’s italics), describes Forster’s novel as “a masterpiece of understanding.”

of secondary importance. Each is linked to the others and has significance because all can be understood as part of a vital, non-static process. If the unanswerable dimensions of Forster's text promote this understanding, then his difficult discourse is to be understood as productive, his evasions of language as "slighter gestures of dissent" against the reifications of imperial dominance and liberal aporia alike, and against such sublime impositions upon any phase of critical or creative theory and practice.

Consider again the recurrent trope of the Song of the Milkmaidens to Krishna. The presence of the song in the text conforms to Said's concept of elaboration and of "letting go" by which music "becomes a mode for thinking through or thinking with the integral variety of human cultural practices, generously, noncoercively, and, yes, in a utopian cast, if by utopian we mean, worldly, possible, attainable, knowable," (ME, p. 105). In the first case, this is a song, not a statement, and it is first introduced into the text as sound, not language, which is nonsequential and nonteleological and which in every other way resists the logic of the European ears listening to it. Godbole sings it at the end of Fielding's tea-party, with all the principal characters arrayed to hear him: "His thin voice rose, and gave out one sound after another. At times there seemed rhythm, at times there was the illusion of a Western melody. But the ear, baffled repeatedly, soon lost any clue, and wandered into a maze of noises, none harsh or unpleasant, none intelligible.... The sounds continued and ceased after a few moments as casually as they had begun—apparently halfway through a bar, and upon the subdominant," (PI, p. 71-2). The absence of order and form both seduces and confounds the listeners, and the proliferation of featureless noises constitutes a maze in which they seem willing at first to be lost. This seems an anticipation of Adela's experience in the caves—with their indescribable echo and endlessly self-reflecting walls they are a similar "maze of noises" into which she is drawn to such indeterminate result. The result in the song is also similar to Adela's case—the women invite the attentions of the avatar of their desire but do not receive anything so definite as sexual contact. Still, something has happened: an appeal has been made, and frustrated; desire has been expressed and deferred. Both aspects are equally resonant, and together they constitute the articulation—as Godbole explains in his simultaneously provocative and elusive way: "I say to him, Come, come, come, come, come, come. He neglects to come." (PI, p. 72). A direct appeal results only in frustration, desire expressed so blatantly must be deferred. What is being desired is communion with God, and Forster's point, as much as Godbole's, is that on this earth such communion is not

possible in any sustained way, nor can the specific character of such communion be imagined or expressed. And yet, it is the universal desire. Fragmented and replicated in infinite ways it defines every human action, from imperial aggression to individual love. More immediately, it defines human creativity, insofar as every act of imagination is an attempt to apprehend one of those hundred voices, one glimpse into the larger vision. Each expressed act of imagination falls short of this larger ideal, however unified in and of itself, and thereby compels further acts of creation—each perpetuates the infinite process of yearning which is creativity itself. As Forster ends his biography of Dickinson, "*Das unbeschreibliche hier ist's getan?* No. And perhaps it only could be done through music. But that is what has lured me on."<sup>63</sup>

Thus the very deferrals of the song suggest Said's "worldly, possible, attainable, knowable" utopia—by valorizing "human cultural practices" according to their "integral variety," not according to any singular innate essence. And the rhythmic repetitions of the song throughout the text, an echo of itself, suggest the same: "[India] calls 'Come' through her hundred mouths, through objects ridiculous and august. But come to what? She has never defined. She is not a promise, only an appeal," (PI, p. 128). Any one act, even any hundred, will not constitute a sufficient appeal to achieve satisfaction, or arrival; but the consciousness of the creative process itself, and the ability to be creative, they constitute a knowable utopia.<sup>64</sup> This is no place at which we can arrive—even though towards it we make our constant passage.<sup>65</sup>

Hence Forster's dictum from *Aspects of the Novel* that the novelist "must cling to" the idea of "Expansion.... Not completion. Not rounding off but opening out," (AN, p. 116). Hence also the rhetorical rhythms which consistently work against definition, exposition, development, even interpretation. These constitute a shifting network of motifs and devices, an elaboration on intertwining themes, which has no climax, comes to no conclusions, and leaves off with a suspended note of deferred desire—no, not

<sup>63</sup> Forster, *Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson* (1973), p. 201.

<sup>64</sup> Compare a comment from "The Creator as Critic", p. 116, which ends by endorsing a polyphonic critical methodology: "Creators who have done good (as apart from interesting) criticism, seem both to forget and to remember their own experiences—i.e. forget what they have created and also the personal process that led them to it, but remember that they *have* created. This enables them to approach the work of others from without and from within, and a double approach is more likely to lead to truth than a single one."

<sup>65</sup> In this respect, and concerning what follows, one recalls Forster's intense fondness for and consistent endorsement of the poetry of Cavafy (see Furbank, pp. 31-33ii, and Forster "The Complete Poems of C. P. Cavafy," (TCD, pp. 233-237), whose "Ithaka" expresses similar ideas: Ithaka may be a dreadful place when you get there, but fret not, "For Ithaka has given you the journey." This sentiment is taken from Montaigne, and also appealed to Leonard Woolf, of course, who used it as the title for the fifth and last volume of his autobiography, *The Journey not the Arrival Matters* (1969).

yet, not there. And these infringements upon the rhetoric of realism are themselves intertwined in both the method and the message of the text: its rhetoric and its ideas contribute overlappingly to the strangely dislocating effect, to the strangely dislocated attitudes. In these respects *A Passage to India* might seem to be essentially allied with the major modernist texts of its time: *Ulysses*, *A la recherche du temps perdu*, "The Waste Land", *The Waves*. And yet, the novel clearly attempts to move beyond the resignation and isolation which a modernist apprehension of its social reality would almost certainly have engendered—and it equally clearly attempts to move beyond the racism and oppressiveness which a realist representation would seem to be unable to eradicate from its rhetoric, realism (exactitude of definition, implying a claim to comprehensive knowledge and control) being a dominant mode of the imperial culture in question. Instead the novel is what it claims to be: a passage, a movement between categories, an elusive and unstable liminality. It inhabits the space between a clear vision of the possibility of engagement or connection in a world community, and a strong, resonant hope for a utopia whose consummation can at least be desired, if unfulfilled. This desire, furthermore, is itself seen to be transformative, just as the tendency of the text is to pull away from an inadequate rhetoric and strive toward an unattainable one. The text itself is an "emblem of passage; a passage not easy, not now, not here, not to be apprehended except when it is unattainable," (PI, p. 304).

As a result, there is no clear and obvious center to the text, no defining moment, no scene which on its own will serve to illustrate the basic concerns. There is, however, a queer, incidental, and rarely-cited passage from very near the end in which we have a close analog in the self-conscious rhetoric of prose to the Song of the Milkmaidens and to the whole experience of the non-rape in the Caves. Godbole is celebrating the festival of Gokul Ashtami, and by way of comment upon the ideas behind the rituals, the text assumes a manner which flirts with the explicit as much as the mystical, and seems to hint at being the heart of the whole, even though it comes in a marginal moment. This, as much as anything, seems to be the spirit of the novel, and approaches an answer to the question of why it is written in the way it is:

But the human spirit had tried by a desperate contortion to ravish the unknown, flinging down science and history in the struggle, yes, beauty herself. Did it succeed? Books written afterwards say "Yes". But how, if there is such an event, can it be remembered afterwards? How can it be expressed in anything but itself? Not only from the unbeliever are mysteries hid, but the adept himself cannot retain them. He may think, if he chooses, that he has been with God, but, as soon as he thinks it, it becomes history, and falls under the rules of time. (PI, p. 278)



Attempts to "ravish the unknown" are what comprise our cultural and political practices, in all their "integral variety." The crisis of imperialism—as it impacts upon society as well as upon the novel—is not that there are aspects of India which are "hid" from the English, the Orientalist, the novelist, the "unbeliever"; rather, imperialism and its literatures strive so earnestly to acquire, to regulate, to define, to know, even though these endeavors will never attain to the universal. It is possible to interpret such attempts, either individually or collectively, as having successfully apprehended some truth. But the moment such an idea is expressed it ceases to be wholly true—it is only an interpretation of the truth, and often a grotesque misinterpretation.<sup>66</sup> When Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson asked Forster the persistent question, "What did happen in the Marabar Caves?" Forster replied in an appropriately tantalizing manner: "In the cave it is *either* a man, *or* the supernatural, *or* an illusion. If I say, it becomes whatever the answer a different book."<sup>67</sup> Adela's compulsion to see the real India metamorphoses by "desperate contortion" into the precipitous events following her visit to the Caves—the "real India" which she perceives is her subliminally-held Liberal Orientalist terror, expressed as an imagined rape. And yet, nothing actually happens. India cannot be expressed with such devices: the moment one thinks one has been raped in a cave, or seen the real India, or been with God, or read to the heart of a book, one has merely engaged in another cultural practice within linear time—a creative act, no doubt, but not a true one, and certainly not utopia. India can be expressed only in itself; in answer to the question of why *A Passage to India* operates the way it does, the more it calls attention to the passage and the process, and the more delicately it does so, the closer it comes to its own worldly, possible, attainable, knowable India.

<sup>66</sup> Compare the remarkably similar diction—note the use of the word 'rape', which can be associated with 'ravish'—in this passage from "The Creator as Critic" p. 70: "For me a critic is a parasite on a bird's back, but never a bird, [who like poetry, can have wings]. He may be 'carried away', but it must be in a wakeful state rather than a dream, so that he retains words afterwards to describe his rape. He may be carried up to the seventh heaven, but if he gives one little skip on his own he has deserted his subject, and attempted creation." See also MS "Power and Authority": "A parallel could be drawn between the priest, the minister of religion on the one hand, and the literary critic on the other. Both seek to intervene between the individual and that which he desires to understand. In the first case the individual desires to understand the universe and the circumstances into which he has been born. In the second case he desires to understand a comparable object, namely a book. As long as the intervention is tentative and gentle it may bring depth. We are all terribly ignorant—at least I am—and need all the help we can get. But the moment the intervention becomes authoritative it changes its character and changes for the worse. For the literary critic to be authoritative is absolutely unjustifiable; let him practice the modesty which befits his unimportance and allow the reader to get at the book. The priest, . . . as soon as he becomes authoritarian, . . . in his vast sphere does what the literary critic does in his small one; he interferes [interposes?] and he prevents the individual from getting at the universe and coming to his own conclusions about it, or rather his own absence of conclusions."

<sup>67</sup> Letter to Dickinson, 26 June 1924.

Thus, India is inexpressible in this text not because of Forster's Liberal Orientalism, but rather because this very anxiety is made to confront the incontrovertible fact of India's voices within "the integral variety of human cultural practices." The moment India is removed from that context, reified by some metaphor, some language, some specific imagining, it ceases to be India and becomes something else: an illusion, a desire, a text. This text at least possesses an understanding of its own limitations, and attempts through subversions of its own language and of other reifying tendencies at least to allow for an *expanding* understanding. The empathy of message and method both derives from and achieves this understanding, this respectfulness. It does not express or apprehend the inexpressible, nor by desperate contortion try to ravish an unknowable postcolonial vision—instead it gestures toward it, and the appeal is beautiful.

How then to discuss such a text—one which has so clearly announced its own refusal to bear the weight of its own understanding, one which has so efficiently renounced the power of language to convey anything relevant to these concerns? One operates as the text itself has done, through devices other than those of language. This is of course vastly difficult, because here we have a novel and a critical context both confined to language; but that is part of the point, the embedded frustration and inspiration. The eternally deferred hope is that the rhythms and gestures and evasions and sounds which populate, control, and thrive within the text can be seen and shown actually to *constitute* it. Even the most ambitious imperialism could never dream of amalgamating all cultures into its hegemony in such a fashion. Forster's method and message are both subversion and exaltation of the empire of signs which are inescapable in this world, yet which we can choose to make productive. The understanding of the text is that elaboration upon those signs, in all their integral variety, will take us elsewhere—hence this polyphonic, intimate, gestural reading. This novel, and reading this novel, may well be ideal means of envisaging a better world for tomorrow, for proclaiming the vision of a postcolonial world, and for keeping our minds in motion till we may move even beyond that. The highest metaphor, that of a world community, must necessarily evade depiction. It is not of this world, not of this time—"No, not yet. No, not there,"—and yet it is the point to which this world constantly tends. Rather than dwelling on our failure to step into heaven, or to realize utopia here and now, *A Passage to India* is part of the process bringing us that much closer to a vision which can be held in common—that we may come together on our own, with all our hundred voices.

## CHAPTER FIVE

# CONCLUSION

---

"AN IMAGINATION OF THE FUTURE," writes Jerome McGann, "of what the future should be, determines both the writing and the reading of the texts we inherit and create."<sup>1</sup> In Forster, Thompson, and Woolf we have explored the imagination of the future not as a representational act, but as a rhetorical one. Forster's infringements upon the rhetoric of realism, his alignments to some of the innovations of modernism, and his own idiosyncratic rhetorical strategies are all determined by his particular imagination of a postcolonial future. Before him we explored Thompson's efforts through an anxious rhetoric of voice to dislodge himself from a reprehensible past, the better to approach a more positive future. His strong sense of inherited guilt and responsibility conditions that momentum toward atonement by which he imagines a postcolonial future will be initiated—though this anxious rhetoric is not sufficiently creative or resonant to characterize as anything more than a precursor to later inspirations of a similar sort. Similarly, Woolf's fiction represents a self-conscious disaffection with the realist and sentimental rhetoric of narrative fiction, a loss of creative energy caused by anxieties over the inherited genre. Woolf's reading and writing of imperialism imagine only that there must be an alternate future if civilization—if literature—is to continue. All three of these figures write for the future without ever representing what its shape might be, yet always implying, through their anxieties as well as through their rhetorical strategies for dealing with those anxieties, that it will be a postcolonial one. In this imagining, all three writers precede the critical and creative energies of today which still endeavor to consummate a world beyond colonialism. Woolf, Thompson, and Forster stand before those energies as precursors.

Even a sketchy glimpse at some of what has succeeded these writers in India indicates their place on the developing trajectory of postcolonialism. Mulk Raj Anand's (1905— ) social realism follows directly from Woolf's—even circumstantially, through his strong Bloomsbury connections.<sup>2</sup> Anand's earliest works—*Untouchable* (1935), *Coolie* (1936)—take up the cry of *The Village in the Jungle*, the acute social consciousness, the direct narrative appeal further strengthened by an Indian vantage point: up to that time this point of view was almost unique, a view from underneath imperial society and Indian society in general, from within the

---

<sup>1</sup> McGann (1989), p. 87.

<sup>2</sup> See Anand's own *Conversations in Bloomsbury* (1981).

most needful classes and individuals, and from an Indian man writing in English. Raja Rao (1908—) departs from explicit realism with a more philosophical approach; his concern is to inform the representation of Indian realities with Indian-derived and -inherited perspectives. His first novel *Kanthapura* (1938) evokes the narrative method of a village story-teller, its central character is motivated by a pointedly personal devotion to Mahatma Gandhi, and this is then communicated to and shared by his friends and family. The novel itself, in its method and message, communicates a new understanding for the role of story-telling and ideological influence on aspects of that society which preceded and motivated the independence of India. R. K. Narayan (1906—), whose career spans precolonial, independence, and postcolonial periods, has helped make the English novel distinctly Indian. His manipulations of the rhetoric of the various narrative traditions—comedy, mystery—are conspicuously skewed from the expectations of a western inheritance. The epic and fabular traditions in South India, as opposed to those in Europe, are less extensively based on love and marriage; in *The Vendor of Sweets* (1967) western topics and devices are consequently replaced as the telos of the comic form with other things substituted in their place. The mystery of *The Man-Eater of Malgudi* (1961) involves not a human murder but the more innately Hindu horror of taxidermy, the mass murder of multiple life-forms; also the heroes of the story are not humans but an elephant, a mosquito, etc. Other basic elements of the English novel are hybridized and Indianized: the language becomes dialectal, the setting in the town of Malgudi is comprised equally and incidentally of western and eastern physical details, characters tend to be involved in personal journeys away from illusion and toward renunciation, plot and structure are no longer centripetal in motion but polyvocal. The near absence of closure in any one of Narayan's novels, and the sense of his entire oeuvre representing a vast *roman fleuve*, associate his work with the "puranic" narrative traditions of the Vedas and the Jataka as much as with the modernism of Joyce, Musil, and Proust as inherited from Balzac; equally, this connotes the governing importance of the sense of process, as opposed to goal or theme. All of these novels—Anand's, Rao's, and Narayan's—contribute to the transition away from the monodic authoritarian past of English forms (rhetorical, political), set the genre moving through the polyvocal present, and remain open to the implied but indescribable future. In these respects, they are founded upon the creative inspirations and critical frustrations of Woolf, Thompson, and Forster.

Later generations of English Indian novelists are more properly called postcolonial: Kamala Markandaya's (1924—) *Nectar in a Sieve* (1954), for example,



takes up Anand's realist mantle and focuses it on gender and family issues. Many of Rao's concerns are echoed in Kushwanth Singh's (1915—) *Train to Pakistan* (1956), a terse and schematic novel representing the atomization undergone by a multicultural society during Partition, and the process by which various ideologies—religious, cultural, personal—are distilled, communicated, and reified. Departing from Narayan, Anita Desai's (1937—) works such as *Clear Light of Day* (1980), *In Custody* (1984), and *Baumgartner's Bombay* (1988) continue in increasingly subtle ways to manipulate the novel form as an inheritance from European traditions, adapting it to her particular imagination of an Indian reality and a cosmopolitan postcolonial future. These works inherit the legacy of their immediate predecessors in the tradition of Indian English Fiction and also have in Woolf, Thompson, and Forster conspicuous precursors. Further, they connect the English writers of the first half of the century with the English Indian writers of today from all corners of the earth—Salman Rushdie, Vikram Seth, Bharathi Mukherjee, Gita Mehta, and so on.<sup>3</sup>

In so many of these writers, the lack of anti-imperial rhetoric is conspicuous—the implication being that there are other things more immediately worth representing and communicating than the developing and inevitable end of English cultural dominance in India. This lack of strident interest in decolonization—even in scenes depicting nationalist activities and crises of various sorts and levels of intensity—is particularly interesting given that most of the texts were written in the period of acceleratingly intense political nationalism. Rao's *Kanthapura* and the final scene of Anand's *Untouchable* represent Gandhism in action, but as something witnessed by the principal characters within the larger arch of their traditional daily lives, and as something to recount and narrativize. The texts, and others like them, stand somewhat symptomatically apart from the ideologically nationalist perspective on decolonization. What Said says of one stage in the critical development of postcolonial historiography is also true of fiction, and serves as a model for how 20th century English Indian novels can be read: a newer generation has chosen “to focus on rhetoric, ideas, and language rather than upon history *tout court*, preferring to analyse the verbal symptoms of power rather than its brute exercise, its processes and tactics rather than its sources, its intellectual methods and enunciative techniques rather than its morality—to deconstruct rather than to destroy,” (CI, p. 312) Many English Indian novelists seem to have accommodated an innate sense that

<sup>3</sup> The most extensive bibliography of contemporary English Indian writing is Nelson (1993); see also Nelson (1992).



postcolonialism is not a state to be claimed but a process to be collaborated in, by many types and in many ways—that it is not an ideology to be established like a new imperialism—and that its most immediate relevance and resonance in daily life will come from understanding it as a process of learning new languages and new literatures. In this respect also, in their ideological gentleness and rhetorical subtlety for accommodating the conspicuous social and political events in their time, these later writers seem to derive directly from Woolf, Thompson, and Forster. All of these figures are English Indian writers in one sense or another, and all concentrate their cultural and intellectual energies to communicate a vision, an imagined future inherited and created through rhetoric.

THUS IN THE PROCESS of understanding these later writers (and others) in relation to the earlier ones, and of exploring that relationship as one of rhetorical influence and developmental continuity—once again citing Said—“we need to go on and to situate these in a geography of other identities, peoples, cultures, and then to study how, despite their difference, they have always overlapped one another, though unhierarchical influence, crossing, incorporation, recollection, deliberate forgetfulness, and, of course, conflict,” (CI, p. 401). The overlapping, intertwining character of Forster’s, Thompson’s, and Woolf’s work, as well as their various strategies for minimizing and working around rhetorical and political-ideological conflict, seem to constitute early explorations into Said’s new geography. Similarly, the overlapping, intertwining relationships between the English writers in India and Indian writing in English seem to be significantly enriched when understood and explored through a polyphonic methodology. This pattern of influence itself, operating vertically between the earlier and the later writers, as well as the patterns of influence within any given text, operating horizontally between Indian and British rhetorics, require and indeed deserve such an understanding for the literature to continue developing. The idea has always been to keep at bay the reifying tendencies inherent in all reading and writing which, unwittingly or not, would perpetuate an imperial experience. If reading these writers, and reading them in such a polyphonic way, can help make that resistance, and if it can generate a positive and creative energy in fiction and culture, then empire is receding—and Woolf, Thompson, and Forster are true precursors to postcolonialism.

## Primary Sources

### LEONARD WOOLF (1880-1969)

#### TEXTS

*After the Deluge: A Study of Communal Psychology*, 2 volumes (London: Hogarth Press, v. 1, 1931; v. 2 1939)

*Autobiography, 1880-1960*, 2 vols., intro. by Quentin Bell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980)

Original (London: Hogarth Press) Edition:

*Sowing*, 1880-1904 (1960)

*Growing*, 1904-1911 (1961)

*Beginning Again*, 1911-1918 (1964)

*Downhill All the Way*, 1919-1939 (1970)

*The Journey Not the Arrival Matters*, 1939-1969 (1969)

*Barbarians at the Gate* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1939)

"Conrad's Vision: The Illumination of Romance," [not Woolf's title] Monk's House Papers, University of Sussex Library, ed. by J. H. Stape in *English Literature in Transition*, 1993, v. 36, n. 3, pp. 286-302

*Diaries in Ceylon*, ed. with preface, *Ceylon Historical Journal*, July 1959-April 1960, v. IX, nn. 1-4; also including *Stories from [sic] the East: Three Short Stories on Ceylon*; introductions by S. D. Saparamadu and Mervyn de Silva; and Glossary

*Economic Imperialism* (London: The Swarthmore Press, 1920)

*Empire and Commerce in Africa: A Study in Economic Imperialism* (London: Labour Research Department, 1920)

*Essays on Literature, History, Politics, Etc.* (London: Hogarth Press, 1927), pp. 57-71. Originally reviews of Conrad: "Mr Conrad's *The Rover*," 8 Dec 1923, p. 377; "Joseph Conrad," 2 Aug 1924, p. 595; and "The Last Conrad," [*Suspense*] 3 Oct 1925, p. 18

"The Hotel" (London: Hogarth Press, 1938)

*Imperialism and Civilisation* (London: Hogarth Press, 1933; 1st ed. 1928)

*Letters of Leonard Woolf*, ed. by Frederick Spotts (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1989)—Also containing a superb chronology, and some Labour Party Memoranda: "Note on Self-Government for Ceylon," 8 Nov 1918, "On the Demands for Reform of the Ceylon Constitution," Nov 1938

Memoranda to the Labour Party, Advisory Committee on Imperial Questions: Museum and Archives of Labour History, 103 Princes Street, Manchester, M1 6DD

"Preface" to *Diaries in Ceylon*; see above

*Principia Politica* (London: Hogarth Press, 1953)—volume 3 of *After the Deluge*

*Quack! Quack!* (London: Hogarth Press, 1935)

*Stories of the East* (Richmond, Surrey: The Hogarth Press, 1921): "A Tale Told by Moonlight," "Pearls and Swine," "Two Brahmins"; also included in *Diaries in Ceylon*, pp. 253-286, although mistitled "Stories from the East"

*The Village in the Jungle* (London: Edward Arnold, 1913)

*The Wise Virgins* (London: Edward Arnold, 1914)

#### REVIEWS OF WOOLF

##### *THE VILLAGE IN THE JUNGLE*

*Times Literary Supplement*, 27 Feb 1913, v. 89

*New York Times*, 12 Oct 1913, p. 539

*Dial*, Aug 1926, v. 81, p. 172

*New Republic*, 28 Apr 1926, v. 46, p. 309

##### *THE VILLAGE IN THE JUNGLE*—first American edition

*New York Times*, 7 Mar 1926, p. 8

##### "PEARLS AND SWINE"

*Times Literary Supplement*, 14 March 1921

Fyfe, Hamilton in *Daily Mail*, 2 April 1921

##### GROWING

Forster, E. M., "The Sahib from Bloomsbury," in *The Observer*, 5 Nov 1961, p. 29

##### DIARIES IN CEYLON

*Pacific Affairs*, v. 35, 1962, p. 430

*Western Political Quarterly*, v. 16, 1963, p. 258

##### LETTERS, ed. by Frederick Spotts

Annan, Noel, "Best of Bloomsbury," in *New York Review of Books*, v. 37, n. 5, 29 Mar 1990, pp. 28-30

Eder, Doris L., "A Journey that Mattered," in *The Virginia Quarterly Review*, Summer 1991, v. 67, n. 3, pp. 573-79

Rudikoff, Sonya, "The Unknown Leonard Woolf," in *The American Scholar*, Spring 1991, v. 60, n. 2, pp. 311-31

# E. J. THOMPSON (1886-1946)

## MODERN PAPERS READING ROOM, BODLEIAN LIBRARY, OXFORD UNIVERSITY

### MSS

#### -CORRESPONDENCE—handlist number format (MS.Eng.c.####)

Many of Thompson's own letters have been destroyed (see MS.Eng.c.5364, folio 71); most of what are listed are letters from the individuals named to Thompson, unless otherwise indicated.

Buchan, John	.5275, fol. 109
Canton, William	.5276, 1918-1926; (to WC, .5277)
Collingwood, W.	.5284, Dec 1924 through Dec 1925, esp. fols. 218, 220v
Fisher, Philip	.5288, to PF, 1945; see also Fisher (1950) below
Forster, E. M.	.5288, fols. 152-174, and in King's Modern Archives, Cambridge
Gandhi, M. K.	.5289, fol. 18
Garratt, Doit	.5284, 14 Dec 1945
Haksar, K. N.	.5291, 19 Jun 1932 and 20 Nov 1934
Iqbal, Muhammad	.5291, fols. 220-227; see also Hasan (1979) below
Lyon, P. C.	.5300, 1 & 5 Nov and 11 Dec 1925
Mahalanobis, Prasanta	.5302, 1924-5; see also E.P.Thompson (1993), "Note on Sources"
Margoliouth, H. N.	.5364, (to T.Thompson, 29 Nov 1951 and 7 Jan 1952)
Nehru, Jawaharlal	.5305, 10 Apr 1941, 10 Apr 1946; and in Nehru (1958) below
Ratcliffe, S. K.	.5309, fols. 1-270, esp. 1925ff on OM and novels
Rothenstein, William	.5311, fols 32-57; see also Lago (1974) below
Rushbrooke, W. G.	.5311, fols. 97-209, esp. 1925-26 on OM
Seal, Brajendranath	.5314, fols. 30-33
Tagore, Rabindranath	.5318, fols. 156-7, 166 and in Rabindra Bhavan Archives, Visva-Bharati, Santiniketan, Bengal and in E. P. Thompson (1993) below—on OM, p. 89
Thompson, E. W.	.5319, fol. 68
Thompson, Elizabeth.	MS.Eng.d.2690, fols. 47, 49
Thompson, Theodosia	.5364 (to H. N. Margoliouth, fols. 62-71)
Woolf, L. S.	.5322, fols. 123-131

### -MISCELLANEOUS MSS

Reports to Rhodes Trust (1932, 1939) [on travels to India]	MS.Eng.c.5331
Miscellaneous Indian Writings [on Gandhi, fols. 29-35]	
MS.Eng.c.5330	
Miscellaneous Literary Criticism [lecture on Milton's prosody]	MS.Eng.c.2647
Reviews by Thompson [of "Mutiny" literature; proofs & cuttings]	MS.Eng.c.5333, 5334
<i>Lily in a Jade Vase</i> (novel, ca. 1939-1945)	MS.Eng.d.2645
also called <i>Pilgrim to Tibet</i> , under pseudonym "John Lancastre", never published	

### -BROADCAST SCRIPTS

"Matters of Moment," Empire Transmissions, 1937-'39	MS.Eng.c.5325
---	---------------

## REVIEWS OF EJT, AND OTHER PRESS REFERENCES TO HIM

see also MS.Eng.c.5336-5344 (reviews) and .5355 (press cuttings, obituaries, etc.)  
Reviews of *The Other Side of the Medal* in MS.Eng.c.5342.

- Times of India*, 22 Feb 1926, review of *The Other Side of the Medal*, author unattributed  
*The Hindu*, Madras, 23 Feb 1926, review of *The Other Side of the Medal*, by K. M. Panikkar  
*The Saturday Review*, 30 Apr—18 Jun 1927, T. Rice Holmes and E.J.Thompson  
*Nation & Athenaeum*, 24 Mar—7 Apr 1928, P.C.Lyon and Evan Cotton  
*The Observer*, 21 Sep 1930, review by John Ervine of a reissue of "Atonement"

Published Novels:

- An End of the Hours* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1938)  
*A Farewell to India* (London: Ernest Benn Limited, 1931)  
*An Indian Day* (London: Alfred A. Knopf, 1927)  
*Night Falls on Siva's Hills* (London: Heinemann, 1929)  
*The Youngest Disciple* (London: Faber and Faber, 1938)  
*Burmese Silver* (London: Faber and Faber, 1937)  
*So A Poor Ghost* (London: Macmillan, 1933)

Historical:

- A History of India* (London: Benn's Sixpenny Pamphlets, Ernest Benn, 1927)  
*The Life of Charles, Lord Metcalfe* (London: Oxford University Press, 1943)  
*The Making of the Indian Princes* (London: Oxford University Press, 1943)  
*The Rise and Fulfillment of British Rule in India*, with G. T. Garratt (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1934)  
*Suttee: A Historical and Philosophical Inquiry into the Hindu Rite of Widow-Burning* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1928)

Commentary, Criticism, and Polemic:

- A Letter from India* (London: Faber and Faber, 1932)  
*Cithaeron Dialogues* (London: George G. Harap, 1924)  
*Ethical Ideals in India Today*, Conway Memorial Lecture, 22 Mar 1942, E.M. Forster presiding (London: Watts and Co., 1942)  
*Handbook of English Prosody and Poetry-Writing for Indian Students* (Madras: Methodist Publishing House, 1924)  
*The Other Side of the Medal* (London: Hogarth Press, 1925; Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1974)  
*Rabindranath Tagore: Poet and Dramatist*, revision of 1924 edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1948)  
*Rabindranath Tagore: Poet and Dramatist*, (1948 edition) intro. by Harish Trivedi (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1991)  
*Tagore* (London: Oxford University Press, 1924)  
*Tagore: His Life and Work* (Calcutta: Association Press, Y.M.C.A., 1921); 2nd edition (London: Oxford University Press, 1928)  
*The Reconstruction of India* (London: Faber and Faber, 1930; "cheap edition," 1931)  
*You Have Lived Through All This* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1939)  
Review of "Samson Agonistes" in *The London Quarterly Review*, April 1916.

Plays

- Atonement*, Contemporary British Dramatists #18 (London: Ernest Benn, 1924); 2nd edition (London: Kingswood Press, 1929)  
*Three Eastern Plays*, "Queen of Ruin", "The Clouded Mirror", and "Easter Evening" by Theodosia Thompson (London: Allen and Unwin, 1927)  
*Krishna Kumari*, Contemporary British Dramatists (London: Ernest Benn, 1924)



## E. M. Forster (1879-1970)

- Original publication information is given below, as well any significant detail about subsequent editions. Whenever possible, references in the text and notes are to the Abinger Edition.
- See also B. J. Kirkpatrick's invaluable, but no longer fully accurate, *Bibliography of E. M. Forster*, The Soho Bibliographies, XIX, with a forward by E. M. Forster (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1985).

### KING'S COLLEGE MODERN ARCHIVES, CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY

#### MSS

- “The Creator as Critic,” AMS and typescript of lectures for  
Cambridge University Faculty of English, Lent, 1931, vi/3.1, v. 8/23  
(volume entitled ‘Miscellaneous’)
- “Definition of Tolerance,” TMS, 1950s, vi/29, v. 8/22
- “English Literature Since the War,” AMS draft, ca. 1922, vi/7, v. 6/11  
Struck through; bears the words ‘Copied Out’ at the head of the first page  
(volume entitled ‘Indian Notebook’)
- “Kanaya,” TMS, 1922. Also printed as Appendix D in  
*The Hill of Devi* (Abinger Edition 14, 1983), pp. 317-324
- “The Lost Guide,” TMS, 1950s, vi/17, v. 8/22  
Ruminations on Alexandria
- “Modern Indian Novelists,” AMS draft, ca. 1941, vi/19, v. 6/11  
Uncompleted, on less than half a page; the beginning of a talk apparently  
to be delivered to a non-academic (West Hackhurst?) audience
- “Modern Writing,” AMS draft, ca. May 1942, vi/20, v. 6/11  
Uncompleted or incomplete; draft of a keynote talk for a colloquium held  
after May 1942 under the title “Modern Writing”
- “Mohammed el-Adl,” AMS, 1922-1960, xi/10.1 Vo 3/1  
Stiff brown notebook, possibly Egyptian, containing EMF's memoir of  
MeA, begun 5 Aug 1922 after EMF received news of MeA's death;  
concluded 27 Sep 1927, but added to in 1960.
- “My Books and I,” AMS, 1920s, xi/12, at ff 68v-71v, v.3/9  
Perhaps a draft of something read to the Memoir Club
- “Power and Authority,” fragment MS draft, 1950s, x/3-c, Frag iii  
Jotted down on the back of a TLS to EMF (from B. W. Fagan, Director of  
Edward Arnold), 25 Nov 1955, and probably intended for a broadcast  
(never made)
- “Syracuse,” AMS, 1901-2, xiv/1, v. 1/4,  
‘Italian Essays Book’, written in Naples, 1902
- “Three Countries,” TMS, 1950s, vi/29, v. 8/22  
Lecture on England, Italy, and India
- “Three Generations,” AMS, 1937, vi/30, v. 8/21  
Read to the Cambridge Majlis in 1937, and to a political discussion group  
at University College, Nottingham on 28 Jan 1939

## BROADCASTS, vii/8 &amp; 9, v. 6/7

- “India in Literature,” 29 Apr 1942, Eastern Service
- “My Debt to India,” 13 Aug 1942 (also in Hindustani 14 Aug), Eastern Service
- “Some Books,” 31 Mar 1943, Eastern Service, vii
- “Books That Have Influenced Me,” 17 Apr 1944, Home Service
- “The Art of Fiction,” 24 Nov 1944, Eastern Service
- “Turning Over a New Leaf: Indian Novelists Writing in English,” 9 Jun 1941, Overseas Service, Eastern Transmission—We Speak to India; no script appears to have survived, see Kirkpatrick F3a(28)

## DIARIES

- Diary: 12 April 1922
- Locked Diary: July 1913
- Indian Journals: 1912-13, 1921, 1945 xii/17, v/ 4/5

## Letters

- to Edward Arnold, 8 June 1924
- to G. L. Dickinson, 8 May 1922  
26 June 1924
- to Syed Ross Masood, 27 September 1922

## Newly surfaced letters:

19 Aug 1912	20 Nov 1913
20 May 1913	02 May 1920
08 Aug 1913	16 May 1920
12 Jul 1913	25 & 26 May 1921
15 Aug 1913	15 April 1922

- to Vasant Anant Shahane, 1963
- to Leonard Woolf, 25 Apr 1912  
30 Apr 1923  
22 Jan 1924

also *Selected Letters*, ed. by Mary Lago and P. N. Furbank (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1983, v.1; 1985, v. 2)

and *Forster-Masood Letters*, ed. by Jalil Ahmed Kidwai (Karachi: Anjuman Press for the Ross Masood Education and Culture Society of Pakistan, 1984)

## PUBLISHED MATERIAL

## REVIEWS

"The Sahib from Bloomsbury, *The Observer*, 5 Nov 1961, p. 29, review of Leonard Woolf's *Growing* (London: Hogarth Press, 1961)

"The Unbuilt City," *Listener*, v. 45, n. 1156, 26 Apr 1951, p. 673, review of W. H. Auden's *The Enchaféd Flood* (London: Faber and Faber, 1951)

## TEXTS

*Abinger Harvest* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967; London: Edward Arnold, 1936)

- "The Early Novels of Virginia Woolf," pp. 119-129

*New Criterion*, v. 4, Apr 1926, pp. 277-286; *Yale Review*, NS, v. 15, Apr 1926, pp. 505-514

- "Joseph Conrad: A Note," pp. 151-156

"The Pride of Mr Conrad," in *Nation and Athenaeum*, v. 28, 19 Mar 1921, pp. 881-882

- "Hymn Before Action," pp. 364-366

*Cambridge Magazine*, v. 10, n. 1, Summer 1920, pp. 11-12

- "Notes on the English Character," pp. 13-26

*Atlantic Monthly*, v. 137, Jan 1926, pp. 30-37

Based on a piece to be read to a Weybridge literary society shortly after Forster's return from his first trip to India, 1912-13

- "Proust," pp. 109-115

"Our Curiosity and Despair," in *New York Herald Tribune*, 21 Apr 1921, Section 11: Books, pp. 1, 6. Review of *A la recherche du temps perdu* and *Proust*, by Clive Bell

- "Salute to the Orient!" pp. 275-292

*London Mercury*, v. 4, Jul 1921, pp. 271-281, although dated 1923 in the original (1936) and all subsequent editions of *Abinger Harvest*

- "T. S. Eliot," pp. 101-109

"Some of our Difficulties," *New York Herald Tribune*, 12 May 1929, pp. 1, 6, Section 11: Books

- "Wilfrid Blunt," pp. 295-308

"Beyond Gog and Magog," *Nation*, London, v. 25, n. 16, 19 Jul 1919, p. 479-480

"Wilfrid Blunt and the East," *Nation*, London, v. 26, n. 21, 21 Feb 1920, pp. 712, 714

*Albergo Empedocle and Other Writings*, ed. by George Thomson (New York: Liveright, 1971)

*Alexandria: A History and a Guide* (Alexandria: Whitehead Morris Ltd., 1922), later reprinted with introductions by Forster and Lawrence Durrell, and afterward and notes by Michael Haag (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982)

*Aspects of the Novel* (London: Edward Arnold, Abinger Edition, 12, 1974; Edward Arnold, 1927)

*Commonplace Book*, ed. by Philip Gardner (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985)

*Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson* (London: Edward Arnold, Abinger Edition 13, 1973; Edward Arnold, 1934)

- "The Gods of India," a review of *The Gods of India* by the Rev. E. O. Martin, in *Albergo Empedocle*, p. 223; originally in *New Weekly*, v. 1, 16 May 1914, pp. 269-270
- The Hill of Devi and Other Indian Writings*, ed. by Elizabeth Heine (London: Edward Arnold, Abinger Edition 14, 1983; Edward Arnold, 1953)
- Howards End* (London: Edward Arnold, Abinger Edition 4, 1973; Edward Arnold, 1910)
- "The Indian Boom," a review of *Svarnalata: Scenes from Hindu Life in Bengal* by T. N. Ganguli, trans. by D. Roy, in *Albergo Empedocle*, pp. 203-206; originally in *Daily News and Leader*, 2 February 1915, p. 7
- "Indians in England," *The New Statesman and Nation*, n.s. 16 (1938), pp. 247-8
- The Longest Journey* (London: Edward Arnold, Abinger Edition 2, 1984; Edward Arnold, 1907)
- The Manuscripts of A Passage to India*, ed. and intro. by Oliver Stallybrass (London: Edward Arnold, Abinger Edition 6a, 1979)
- "The Other Boat" 1913/1923, in *The Life to Come*, (London: Edward Arnold, Abinger Edition 8, 1972), pp. 166-197. See Oliver Stallybrass and George H. Thomson, "E. M. Forster's *The Life to Come*: Description of the Manuscripts and Typescripts at King's College, Cambridge" in *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, v. 72, n. 4, 1978, pp. 477-503
- A Passage to India* (London: Edward Arnold, Abinger Edition 6, 1978; Edward Arnold, 1924)
- Pharos and Pharillon* (Richmond, Surrey: Leonard and Virginia Woolf at the Hogarth Press, 1923)
- "Reflections in India I: Too Late?", *Nation & Athenaeum*, 21 Jan 1922, pp. 614-5
- "Terminal Note," to *Maurice* (London: W. W. Norton & Co, 1971)
- Two Cheers for Democracy* (London: Edward Arnold, Abinger Edition 11, 1972; Edward Arnold, 1951)
- "The Challenge of Our Time," pp. 54-58  
 "The Challenge of Our Time: The View of the Creative Artist," *Listener*, v. 35, n. 900, 11 Apr 1946, pp. 451-2
  - "The Complete Poems of C. P. Cavafy," pp. 233-237  
 "In the Rue Lepsius," *Listener*, v. 46, n. 1166, 5 Jul 1951, pp. 28-29. Review of *The Complete Poems of C. P. Cavafy*, trans. by John Mavrogordato, intro. by Rex Warner
  - "Edward Carpenter," pp. 205-7  
 "Edward Carpenter: A Centenary Note," *Tribune*, n. 404, 22 Sep 1944, pp. 12-13
  - "English Prose Between 1918 and 1939," pp. 266-277  
 The Fifth W. P. Ker Memorial Lecture delivered at the University of Glasgow, 27 Apr 1944.  
 A version of this, "Literature between Two Wars," was read at the First All India Writers' Conference in Jaipur, 1945
  - "India Again," pp. 315-323  
 "India After Twenty-Five Years," *Listener*, v. 35, nn. 890-891, 31 Jan and 7 Feb 1946, pp. 133-4, 171-2
  - "The Last of Abinger," pp. 353-358  
 "Abinger Notes," *Abinger Chronicle*, v. 5, n. 1, Sep 1944, pp. 2-5

- "The Menace to Freedom," pp. 9-11  
*Spectator*, n. 5604, 22 Nov 1935, pp. 861-862
- "The *Raison d'Etre* of Criticism," pp. 105-118  
"An Address Delivered at a Symposium on Music at Harvard University"  
"On Criticism in the Arts, Especially Music," *Harper's Magazine*, v. 195, [European ed. v. 134],  
Jul 1947, pp. 9-17; *Horizon*, v. 18, Dec 1948, pp. 397-411
- "Syed Ross Masood," pp. 285-287  
*Urdu*, v. 17, Oct 1937, pp. 853-860, in English
- "Tolerance," pp. 43-46  
"The Unsung Virtue of Tolerance," *Listener*, v. 26, n. 655, 31 Jul 1941, pp. 160-1
- "Two Books By. T. S. Eliot," pp. 253-256  
"Three by T. S. Eliot," *Listener*, v. 41, n. 1043, Jan 1949, p. 111. Review of *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture*; and "Mr. Eliot's 'Comedy'," *Listener*, v. 43, n. 1104, 23 Mar 1950, pp. 533. Review of *The Cocktail Party*
- "Virginia Woolf," pp. 238-252  
The Rede Lecture, 1941 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 22 May 1942)  
"The Art of Virginia Woolf," *Atlantic Monthly*, v. 170, Sep 1942, pp. 82-90  
(New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 24 Sep 1942)
- "What I Believe," pp. 65-73  
"Two Cheers for Democracy," *Nation*, New York, v. 147, n. 3, 16 Jul 1938, pp. 65-68  
"Credo," *London Mercury*, v. 38, Sep 1938, pp. 397-404  
"What I Believe" (London: Hogarth Press, 1939)



## Secondary Sources

---

- 'A.S.B.', "E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India*" in *Nation & Athenaeum*, 4 Aug 1928, p. 590
- 'S.C.F.', "Beddewewa and Beddegama," in *Ceylon Observer*, 6 March 1960
- Ackerley, Joe Randolph, *Hindoo Holiday* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1932)
- Adas, Michael, *Machines and the Measure of Man: Science, Technology, and Ideologies of Western Dominance* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989)
- Ambedekar, Bhimrao Ramji, *The Untouchables* (Uttar Pradesh: Shrivasti, 1969)
- Anand, Mulk Raj (1905— )  
*Conversations in Bloomsbury* (London: Wildwood House, 1981)  
*Coolie* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1936)  
*Untouchable*, forward by E. M. Forster (London: Wishart Books, 1935)
- Anderson, Benedict, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983; revised ed. 1991)
- Annan, Noel, "Best of Bloomsbury," in *New York Review of Books*, v. 37, n. 5, 29 Mar 1990, pp. 28-30. Review of Frederick Spotts, ed., *Letters of Leonard Woolf*, see Woolf bibliography.
- Afzal-Kahn, Fawzia, *Cultural Imperialism and the Indo-English Novel* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993)
- Ahmad, Shahnon, *No Harvest but a Thorn*, trans. from the Malay by A. Amin (London: Oxford University Press, 1972)
- Alatas, S. H., *The Myth of the Lazy Native: A Study of the Image of the Malays, Filipinos, and Javanese from the 16th to the 20th Century and its Function in the Ideology of Colonial Capitalism* (London: Frank Cass, 1977)
- Arnold, Matthew, "The Function of Criticism in the Present Time" (London: Macmillan and Co., 1895)
- Auden, W. H., *The Enchaféd Flood, or The Romantic Iconography of the Sea* (London: Faber and Faber, 1951)
- Baldaeus, Phillipus, *A True and Exact Description of the Great Island of Ceylon* (Amsterdam: 1672), trans. by Pieter Brohier, intro. by S. D. Saparamadu, in *Ceylon Historical Journal*, July 1958-April 1959, v. VIII, nn. 1-4
- Barua, B. P., ed., *Rommohun Roy and the New Learning: Memorial Lectures* (Orient Longman, Hyderabad, 1988)

- Beaglehole, T. H., *Thomas Munro and the Development of Administrative Policy in Madras, 1792-1818: The Origins of the Munro System* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966)
- Beauman, Nicola, *Morgan: A Biography of E. M. Forster* (London: Hodder and Staunton, 1993)
- Bell, Quentin, "Introduction" to Leonard Woolf, *Autobiography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980)
- Bhabha, Homi  
*Nation and Narration* (London: Routledge, 1990)  
*The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994)
- Bhatnagar, K. C., *Realism in Major Indo-English Fiction: with special reference to M. R. Anand, R. K. Narayan, and Raja Rao* (Bareilly: Prakash Book Depot, 1980)
- Bloom, Harold, *Anxiety of Influence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973)
- Booth, Wayne, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1961)
- Boulton, James T.  
*et al.*, eds., *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, volume 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979-1993)  
 ed. with intro. and notes, Edmund Burke, *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origins of Our Ideals of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (London: 1757; South Bend, IL: University of Notre Dame Press, 1958)
- Bradbury, Malcolm, "Two Passages to India: Forster as Victorian and Modern," in *Aspects of E. M. Forster*, ed. by Oliver Stallybrass (London: Edward Arnold, 1969), pp. 125-6
- Brantlinger, Patrick, *The Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830-1914* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988)
- Briggs, Asa, ed., *Chartist Studies* (London: Macmillan, 1959)
- Brown, E. K., "Rhythm in E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India*," in *Rhythm in the Novel* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1950)
- Burke, Edmund (1729-1797)  
*Philosophical Enquiry into the Origins of Our Ideals of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (London: 1757), ed. with intro. and notes by James T. Boulton (South Bend, IL: University of Notre Dame Press, 1958)  
*Writings and Speeches*, general editor Paul Langford (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981ff); v. 5 (1981), *India: Madras and Bengal, 1774-1785* and v. 6 (1991), *India: The Launching of the Hastings Impeachment, 1786-1788*, ed. by P. J. Marshall

- Burra, Peter, "The Novels of E. M. Forster," *The Nineteenth Century and After*, vol. cxvi (November 1934), pp. 581-94, reprinted as "Introduction" to 1942 Everyman Edition of *A Passage to India* and as Appendix B to Abinger Edition, pp. 315-32
- Candler, Edmund (1874-1926)  
*Abdication* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1922)  
*The Mantle of the East* (London: W. Blackwood, 1910)  
*The Sepoy* (London: John Murray, 1919)  
*The Unveiling of Lhasa* (London: Edward Arnold, 1905)  
*Youth in the East* (New York: Dutton, 1925)—autobiography
- Carnall, Geoffrey and Colin Nicholson, eds., *The Impeachment of Warren Hastings: Papers from a Bicentenary Commemoration* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1989)
- Cavaliero, Glen, *A Reading of E. M. Forster* (London: Macmillan, 1979)
- Chatterji, Partha, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1986)
- Chaudhuri, Nirad, "Passage to and From India," *Encounter*, June 1954
- Cheyfitz, Eric, *The Poetics of Imperialism: Translation and Colonization from The Tempest to Tarzan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991)
- Clark, T. W., ed. and intro., *The Novel in India: Its Birth and Development* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1970)
- Clifford, Hugh  
 "Letters to Conrad and Kipling," *Notes and Queries*, vv. 31-33, Dec. 84-June 85  
 "Mankind and the Jungle", *Blackwood's*, June 1913, pp. 844-851
- Cole, G. D. H., and A. W. Filson, *British Working-Class Movements: Select Documents, 1789-1875* (London: Macmillan, 1951)
- Colmer, John  
 "Promise and Withdrawal in *A Passage to India*," in *E. M. Forster: A Human Exploration*, ed. by G. K. Das and John Beer (London: Macmillan, 1979), pp. 117-128  
*E. M. Forster: The Personal Voice* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975)
- Conrad, Joseph (1857-1924)  
*The Complete Short Fiction of Joseph Conrad*, ed. and intro. by Samuel Hynes (Hopewell, NJ: The Ecco Press, 1992), vv. 1 and 3  
*Reminiscences*, now called *A Personal Record*, ed. and intro. by Zdzislaw Najder (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), "A Familiar Preface"
- Crews, Frederick, *E. M. Forster: The Perils of Humanism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1962)
- Cronin, Richard, *Imagining India* (London: Macmillan, 1989)

- Curzon, Marquis of Kedleston, *British Government in India: The Story of the Viceroy and Government Houses* (London: Cassell and Brown, 1925)
- Darling, Malcolm, *The Punjab in Prosperity and Debt* (London: Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press, 1925)
- Das, G. K., *E. M. Forster's India* (London: Macmillan, 1977)
- de la Mare, Walter, *Desert Islands*, with illustrations by Rex Whistler (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1930)
- de Silva, Lilamani Chandra, "Imperialist Discourse: Critical Limits of Liberalism in Selected Texts of Leonard Woolf and E. M. Forster," PhD Dissertation, University of North Texas, 1991 (DAI-A 52:12, p. 4339, June 1992)
- de Silva, Mervyn, "Introduction, Part II-General" to Woolf's *Diaries in Ceylon*, *Ceylon Historical Journal*, v. IX, pp. xlvii-lx
- Desai, Anita (1937—)  
*Clear Light of Day* (New York: Harper and Row, 1980)  
*In Custody* (New York: Harper and Row, 1984)  
*Baumgartner's Bombay* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1988)
- DeSalvo, Louise  
*Virginia Woolf's First Voyage: A Novel in the Making* (Totowa, NJ: Rowman, 1980)  
*Virginia Woolf: The Impact of Childhood Sexual Abuse on her Life and Work* (Boston: Beacon, 1989)  
ed. and intro., Virginia Woolf, *Melymbrosia: An Early Version of "The Voyage Out"* (New York: New York Public Library, 1982)
- Devy, G. N.  
*After Amnesia: Tradition and Change in Indian Literary Criticism* (London: Sangam Books; Hyderabad: Orient Longman, 1992)  
*Critical Thought*, ed. with S. K. Desai (London: Oriental University Press, 1987)  
*In Another Tongue: Essays on English Literature* (Frankfurt-am-Main: Peter Lang, 1993)—"The Traditional Framework," "Multiculturalism", "Post-Coloniality and Criticism in Indian Languages"
- Dickens, Charles (1812-1870)  
*Bleak House* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1853)  
*Hard Times* (London: Bradbury and Evans, 1854)
- Dickinson, Goldsworthy Lowes (1862-1932)  
*Appearances*, originally published as "Essays on the Civilisations of India, China, and Japan" (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1914)  
*Letters from John Chinaman* (London: R. Brimley Johnson, 1904), with an introduction by Forster, also published with his biography of GLD
- Dilthey, Wilhelm, *Gesammelte Schriften* (Stuttgart, 1958), VI

- Doll, Robert G., "From Alexandria to Aziz: Sources of E. M. Forster's Eastern Protagonist," PhD Dissertation, University of California, San Diego, 1992 (DAI-A 53:12, p. 4330)
- Dutt, Romeshchandra, *India in the Victorian Age* (London: Kegan, Paul, Trench, Trübner, and Company, Ltd., 1904)
- Eagleton, Terry, review, obituary, or article about Raymond Williams in *The Observer* 1989, attributed to Eagleton on back-cover of Williams (1989); despite a computer search of every 1989 issue of every major London paper, I have been unable to identify the source in more detail
- Easson, Angus, "Introduction" to Elizabeth Gaskell, *North and South* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973)
- Eder, Doris L, "A Journey that Mattered," in *The Virginia Quarterly Review*, Summer 1991, v. 67, n. 3, pp. 573-79. Review of Frederick Spotts, ed., *Letters of Leonard Woolf*; see Woolf bibliography.
- Eliot, T. S., "The Waste Land" (London: Boni and Liveright, 1922)
- Elphinstone, Mountstuart (1779-1859)  
 "Minute on Education, 1824" in *Selections from the Minutes and Other Official Writings*, ed. by George W. Forrest (London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1884)  
 "Report on the Territories Conquered from the Peshwa," (Calcutta: Government Gazette Press, 1821)  
*History of India: The Hindu and Mahometan Periods* (London: John Murray, 1814)  
*The Rise of British Power in the East* (London: John Murray, 1887—posthumous)
- Fanon, Frantz, *Black Skin, White Mask*, trans. by C. L. Markham (New York: Grove, 1967)
- Fischer, Georges  
*Le Parti Travailleiste et la decolonisation de l'Inde* (Paris: François Maspero, 1966)  
*Decolonisation and After* (London: Frank Cass, 1980)
- Fisher, Phil, "Edward Thompson in his Novels," *Methodist Recorder*, 28 Sep 1950—also found in Thompson Papers, MS.Eng.c.5335, folio 216
- Fitzgerald, Percy, *The Great Canal at Suez, its Political, Engineering, and Financial History: with and account of the struggles of its projector, Ferdinand de Lesseps* (New York: AMS Press, 1978)
- Forster, E. M.—sources mentioned elsewhere than in Chapter 4  
 ed. by Mary Lago and P. N. Furbank, *Selected Letters* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1983, v.1; 1985, v. 2)  
 "The Unbuilt City," *Listener*, v. 45, n. 1156, 26 Apr 1951, p. 673, review of W. H. Auden's *The Enchaféd Flood* (London: Faber and Faber, 1951)
- Freud, Sigmund, *Das Unheimliche*, trans. by James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1919), v. 18



- Furbank, P. N., *E. M. Forster: A Life* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1978), 2 vols.
- Fyfe, Hamilton, review of Woolf's "Pearls and Swine," in *Daily Mail*, 2 April 1921
- Ganguly, Adwaita, *India: Mystic, Complex, and Real*, forward by John Beer (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidas Publishers, 1990)
- Gaskell, Elizabeth (1810-1865)  
*Mary Barton* (1848), (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1970)  
*North and South* (1855), ed. by Angus Easson (London: Oxford University Press, 1973)  
 Review of *Mary Barton* in *Fraser's Magazine*, XXXIX, 1849, pp. 429-32  
 Review of *Mary Barton* in *Athenaeum*, 21 Oct 1848, pp. 1050-51
- Gill, Stephen, "Introduction" to Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary Barton* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1970)
- Gillie, Christopher, *A Preface to Forster* (New York: Longman, 1983)
- Gleig, the Rev. G. H., *Life of Sir Thomas Munro*, with extracts from his letters and papers (London: R. Bentley, 1830)
- Goldsworthy, David, *Colonial Issues in British Politics, 1945-1961: from 'Colonial Development' to 'Winds of Change'* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971)
- Goonetilleke, D. C. R. A., *Images of the Raj: South Asia in the Literature of Empire* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988)
- Graham, Kenneth, *Indirections in the Novel: James, Conrad and Forster* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988)
- Guha, Ranajit, *A Rule of Property for Bengal: An Essay on the Idea of Permanent Settlement* (Paris: Mouton, 1963)
- Gupta, Partha Sarathi, *Imperialism and the British Labour Movement, 1914-1964* (New York: Holmes and Meier Publishers, 1975)
- Hammond, J. L. and B., *The Age of the Chartists, 1832-1854 A Study of Discontent* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1962)
- Harrison, Robert Ligon, "The Manuscripts of *A Passage to India*" (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1965)
- Hasan, Ahmad S., *Iqbal, His Political Ideas at a Crossroads: A Commentary on Unpublished Letters to Professor Thompson* (Aligarh: Printwell, Publishers, 1979)
- Headrick, Daniel, *The Tools of Empire: Technology and European Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981)
- Heine, Elizabeth  
 "Leonard Woolf: 'Three Jews' and Other Fiction," New York Public Library Bulletin, Summer 1976, v. 79, n. 3, pp. 448-458

- "Editor's Introduction" to E. M. Forster, *Arctic Summer and Other Fiction* (London: Edward Arnold, Abinger Edition 9, 1980)
- "Editor's Introduction" to E. M. Forster, *The Hill of Devi and Other Indian Writings* (London: Edward Arnold, Abinger Edition 14, 1983)
- "Editor's Introduction" to E. M. Forster, *The Longest Journey* (London: Edward Arnold, Abinger Edition 2, 1984)
- "Postscript to the Diary of Virginia Woolf, Vol. 1: 'Effie's Story' and *Night and Day*" (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1986)
- ed., Virginia Woolf, *The Voyage Out* (Hogarth Press, 1990)
- Hemenway, Stephen, *The Novel of India*, vol. 1 "The Anglo-Indian Novel," vol. 2 "The Indo-Anglian Novel" (Calcutta: Writers Workshop, 1975)
- Hoggart, Richard, *The Uses of Literacy: Changing Patterns in English Mass Culture* (Fairlawn, NJ: Essential Books, 1957)
- Hopkins, Annette B.  
 "Dickens and Mrs. Gaskell," *The Huntingdon Library Quarterly*, v. ix, 1946, pp. 357-385  
*Elizabeth Gaskell: Her Life and Work* (London: J. Lehmann, 1952), ch. 7
- Hussey, Mark, "Refractions of Desire: The Early Fiction of Virginia and Leonard Woolf," *Modern Fiction Studies*, Spring 1992, v. 38, n. 1
- Hutchins, Francis, *The Illusion of Permanence: British Imperialism in India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967)
- Hynes, S. L., *The Edwardian Turn of Mind* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968)
- Inden, Ron, *Imagining India* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990)
- Iser, Wolfgang, "The Reader as a Component Part of the Realistic Novel", in *The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), pp. 101-120
- James, C. L. R., *Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1938)
- Jameson, Frederic  
 "Magical narrative: Romance as Genre," *New Literary History*, Autumn 1975. v. 7, n. 1, pp. 135-63  
 "Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture," *Social Text*, no. 1, 1986
- Joseph, David I., *The Art of Rearrangement: E. M. Forster's Abinger Harvest* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964)
- Kaye, John William (1814-1876), *The History of the Sepoy War in India* (London: W. H. Allen and Co., 1876)
- Kermode, Frank, "Mr. E. M. Forster as a Symbolist," *The Listener*, 2 Jan 1958, republished as "The One Orderly Product (E. M. Forster)" in *Puzzles and*

- Epiphanies: Essays and Reviews, 1958-1961* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962)
- Kidwai, Jalil, Ahmed, ed., *Forster-Masood Letters* (Anjuman Press for the Ross Masood Education and Culture Society of Pakistan, 1984)
- Kiernan, V. G., *Marxism and Imperialism* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1974)
- Kirkpatrick, B. J., *A Bibliography of E. M. Forster* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985)
- Knowles, L. C. A., *The Economic Development of the British Overseas Empire*, 3 vv. (London: G. Routledge and Sons, 1924-36)
- Knox, Robert, *An Historical Relation of Ceylon* (London: 1681), re-printed with an extensive introduction by S. D. Saparamadu, illustrations, and much ancillary material, in *Ceylon Historical Journal*, July 1956-April 1957, v. VI, nn. 1-4
- Kopf, David, *British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969)
- Kristeva, Julia  
*Nations Without Nationalism*, trans. by Leon Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993)—“What of Tomorrow's Nation?”; “Open Letter to Harlem Désir”; “The Nation and the World”; interview with Elisabeth Bélorgey  
*Strangers to Ourselves*, trans. by Leon Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991)
- Lago, Mary  
*Calendar of the Letters of E. M. Forster* (London: Mansell Publishing Limited, 1985)  
*E. M. Forster: A Literary Life* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995)  
*Imperfect Encounter: The Correspondence of Rabindranath Tagore and William Rothenstein* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974)  
ed., with P. N. Furbank, *Selected Letters of E. M. Forster* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1983, v. 1; 1985, v. 2)
- Laurence, Patricia Oudek, *The Reading of Silence: Virginia Woolf in the English Tradition* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993)
- Lawrence, D. H., (1885-1930), *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, ed. by James T. Boulton et al., vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979-1993)
- Leask, Nigel, *British Romantic Writers and the East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992)
- Leavis, F. R., “Introduction” to *Mill on Bentham and Coleridge* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1950; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980)
- Levine, June Perry, *Creation and Criticism: A Passage to India* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1971)

- Levy, Paul, *G. E. Moore and the Cambridge Apostles* (New York: Holt Press, 1979)
- Lodge, David, *The Language of Fiction* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966)
- London, Bette, *The Appropriated Voice: Narrative Authority in Conrad, Forster, and Woolf* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1990)
- Lowe, Lisa, *Critical Terrains: British and French Orientalisms* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991)
- Lukács, Georg (1885-1971)  
*Studies in European Realism*, trans. by Edith Bone, forward by Roy Pascal (London: Hillway Publishing Company, 1978)  
*The Historical Novel*, trans. by Hannah and Stanley Richard (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1969)  
*The Meaning of Contemporary Realism* (London: The Merlin Press, 1968)
- Lyall, Alfred (1835-1911)  
*Asiatic Studies*, 1st and 2nd series (London: John Murray, 1899), containing "Letters of Vamadeo Shastri"  
*Studies in Literature and History* (London: John Murray, 1915)
- MacDowell, F. P., *E. M. Forster: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973)
- Mackenzie, John  
*Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion, 1880-1960* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984)  
*Imperialism and Popular Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986)
- Maine, Henry (1822-1888)  
*Early Law and Custom* (London: John Murray, 1883)  
*Village Communities in the East and West* (London: John Murray, 1876)
- Majeed, Javed, *Ungoverned Imaginings: James Mill's History of British India and Orientalism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992)
- Malcolm, John (1769-1833)  
*A Memoir of Central India* (London: Kinsbury, Parbry and Allen, 1823)  
*The Government of India* (London: John Murray, 1833)  
*The Political History of India* (London: John Murray, 1826)
- Marcus, Jane, *Virginia Woolf and the Languages of Patriarchy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987)
- Markandaya, Kamala, (1924— ) *Nectar in a Sieve* (New York: J. Day & Co., 1955, c.1954)
- Masterman, C. F. G., *The Condition of England* (London: Methuen, 1909)
- McClure, John, *Kipling and Conrad: The Colonial Fiction* (London: Harvard University Press, 1981)

Maugham, William Somerset (1874-1965)

*East and West: The Collected Short Stories of William Somerset Maugham* (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday, Doran, and Co., c. 1934)

*East of Suez* (London: William Heinmann, 1922)

McConkey, James, *The Novels of E. M. Forster* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1957)

McGann, Jerome, *Rethinking Historicism* (Oxford: Blackwell's, 1989).

McLane, John R., ed., *The Political Awakening in India* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1970)

Mendis, Basil, "The Official Diaries of Leonard Woolf," *Ceylon Daily News*, 21 June 1950

Metcalfe, Charles (1785-1846)

*Minutes, Dispatches and Other Papers*, ed. by J. W. Kaye (London: John Murray, 1855)

"Essay on the best Means of acquiring a Knowledge of the Manners and Customs of the Natives of India," *Essays by the Students of the College of Fort William in Bengal* (Calcutta: n.p., 1802)

Miller, Christopher, *Blank Darkness: Africanist Discourse in French* (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 1985)

Monier-Williams, Monier (1819-1899)

*Buddhism, in its Connexion with Brahmanism and Hinduism, and its Contrast with Christianity* (Varanasi: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series #45, 1964)

*Indian Epic Poetry* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1863)

*Indian Wisdom* (London: William H. Allen and Co., 1875)

*Modern India and the Indians: being a series of impressions, notes, and essays* (London: Trübner, 1878)

*Religious Thought and Life in India: Vedism, Brahmanism, and Hinduism* (London: John Murray, 1883)

*The Holy Bible and the Sacred Books of the East* (London: Seeley and Co., 1887)

Mukherjee, Meenakshi

*Realism and Reality: The Novel and Society in India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1985)

"Mrs. Mullens and Mrs. Collins: Christianity's Gift to Indian Fiction," *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, XVI (August, 1981), pp. 65-75

Mukherjee, Sujit, *Forster and Further: The Tradition of Anglo-India Literature* (Hyderabad: Orient Longman Limited, 1993)

Munro, Thomas (1761-1827)

*Selections from the Minutes and Other Official Writings*, ed. by Sir Alexander J. Arbuthnott (London: C. K. Paul & Co., 1881)

Beaglehole, T. H., *Thomas Munro and the Development of Administrative Policy in Madras, 1792-1818: The Origins of the Munro System* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966)



- Gleig, the Rev. G. H., *Life of Sir Thomas Munro*, with extracts from his letters and papers (London: R. Bentley, 1830)
- Musselwhite, David, "The Trial of Warren Hastings," in Francis Barker et al., *Literature, Politics, and Theory* (London: Methuen, 1986), pp. 77-103
- Naik, M. K., *Mirror on the Wall: Images of India and the Englishman in Anglo-Indian Fiction* (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1991)
- Nandy, Ashis  
*The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983)  
*Traditions, Tyranny, and Utopias: Essays in the Politics of Awareness* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992)
- Narayan, R. K. (1906—)  
*The Vendor of Sweets* (New York: Viking, 1967)  
*The Man-Eater of Malgudi* (London: Heinmann, 1961)
- Narasimhan, Raji, *Sensibility under Stress: Aspects of Indo-English Fiction* (New Delhi: Ashajanak Publications, 1976)
- Nehru, Jawaharlal (1889-1964)  
*Jawaharlal Nehru: an Autobiography: with Musings on Recent Events in India*, new forward by Mark Tully (London: The Bodley Head, 1989)  
*A Bunch of Old Letters: Written Mostly to Jawaharlal Nehru and Some Written By Him* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1958)
- Nelson, Emmanuel S.  
*Writers of the Indian Diaspora: A Bio-Bibliographical Critical Sourcebook* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1993)  
*Reworlding: The Literature of the Indian Diaspora* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1992)
- Ondaatje, Michael, *Running in the Family* (New York: Norton, 1982)
- Orange, Michael, "Language and Silence in *A Passage to India*," in G. K. Das and John Beer, eds., *E. M. Forster: A Human Exploration* (London: Macmillan, 1979)
- Orwell, George (1903-1950)  
*Burmese Days* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1950, c. 1934)  
*Shooting an Elephant* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1950)
- Panikkar, K. M., *Asia and Western Dominance* (New York: Macmillan, 1959)
- Parry, Benita, *Delusions and Discoveries: Studies on India in the British Imagination, 1880-1930* (London: Allen Lane The Penguin Press, 1972)
- Perera, Suvendrini, *Reaches of Empire: The English Novel from Edgeworth to Dickens* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991)

- Phillips, C. H., "James Mill, Mountstuart Elphinstone, and the History of British India," in Phillips, ed., *Historians of India, Pakistan, and Ceylon* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961)
- Pinkney, Tony  
 "Introduction" to Raymond Williams, *The Politics of Modernism* (London: Verso, 1989)  
 "Raymond Williams and the 'Two Faces of Modernism'", in *Raymond Williams: Critical Perspectives*, ed. by Terry Eagleton (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1989), pp. 12-33
- Poole, Roger, *The Unknown Virginia Woolf* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1990)
- Raban, Jonathan, "Introduction" to *The Oxford Book of the Sea* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992)
- Rajan, P. K., ed., *The Growth of the Novel in India: 1950-1980* (New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1989)
- Rao, Raja, (1908—), *Kanthapura* (London: G. Allen and Unwin, 1938)
- Reading, Daniel Rufus Isaacs, 1st Marquis, in *New Leader*, 27 June 1924, p. 10
- Richards, Thomas, "Archive and Utopia", in *The Imperial Archive: Knowledge and the Fantasy of Empire* (London: Verso, 1993), pp. 11-45
- Rosencrance, Barbara, *Forster's Narrative Vision* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982)
- Rosenbaum, S. P.  
*Bloomsbury Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993)  
*The Early Literary History of the Bloomsbury Group*, vol. 2 (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), ch. 14, "Leonard Woolf's Ceylon Writings"
- Roy, Rammohun, (1772-1833), ed. by Nag and Burman, *English Works* (Calcutta: Sadharan Brahmo Samaj, 1945)
- Rubin, David, *After the Raj: British Novels of India Since 1947* (Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1986)
- Rudikoff, Sonya, "The Unknown Leonard Woolf," in *The American Scholar*, Spring 1991, v. 60, n. 2, pp. 311-31. Review of Frederick Spotts, ed., *Letters of Leonard Woolf*; see Woolf bibliography
- Rushdie, Salman, *Imaginary Homelands* (London: Granta, 1991)
- Said, Edward  
*Culture and Imperialism* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1993)  
*Musical Elaborations* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1991)  
*Orientalism* (New York: Random House, 1978)  
*Representations of the Intellectual* (London: Vintage, 1994)—Reith Lectures, 1993

- Santhanam, K., ed. *An Anthology of Indian Literatures* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1969)
- Sayer, Derek, "British Reaction to the Amritsar Massacre, 1919-1920," *Past & Present*, n. 131, May 1991, pp. 130-164
- Schiller, Friedrich von (1759-1805)  
*Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man* (1795)  
"Naive and Sentimental Poetry," (1795)  
"Über das Erhabene", "On the Sublime" (1801), intro., trans., and ed. by Julius Elias (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1966)
- Schwab, Raymond, *Le Renaissance Oriental* (Paris: Editions Payot, 1950)
- Scott, Paul, "How well have they worn?— 1: *A Passage to India*," *The Times*, 6 Jan, 1966, p. 15
- Shelley, Percy Bysshe, (1792-1822), "A Defence of Poetry" (1821) in *Prose Works*, ed. by E. B. Murray (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994)
- Shusterman, David, *The Quest for Certitude in E. M. Forster's Fiction* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1965)
- Siegfried, André, *Suez, Panama, et les routes maritimes mondiales* (Paris: Librairie Armand Colin, 1940), trans. by H. H. and Doris Hemming (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, ca. 1940)
- Singh, Kushwanth, *Train to Pakistan* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1956)
- Skinner, Major Thomas, "Fifty years in Ceylon," *Ceylon Historical Journal*, Oct. 1974, v. XXI
- Smythe, P. R., *Ceylon Commentary* (London: Williams and Norgate Ltd., 1932)
- Spater, George, and Ian Parsons, *A Marriage of True Minds: An Intimate Portrait of Leonard and Virginia Woolf* (London: Jonathan Cape and The Hogarth Press, 1977)
- Spear Hilda, and Abdel Moneim Aly, eds., *Forster in Egypt, A Graeco-Alexandrine Encounter, E. M. Forster's First Interview* (London: Cecil Woolf, 1987)
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty  
*Outside in the Teaching Machine* (New York: Routledge, 1993)  
*The Post-Colonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues* (New York: Routledge, 1990)  
*In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (New York: Routledge, 1988)
- Srinivas Iyengar, K. R., *Sri Aurobindo* (Calcutta: Arya Publishing House, 1945)
- Stallybrass, Oliver  
ed., *Aspects of E. M. Forster* (London: Edward Arnold, 1969)

- "Editor's Introduction" to E. M. Forster, *A Passage to India* (London: Edward Arnold, Abinger Edition 6, 1978; Edward Arnold, 1924)
- "Editor's Introduction" to E. M. Forster, *The Manuscripts of A Passage to India* (London: Edward Arnold, Abinger Edition 6a, 1979)
- Stape, J. H.  
"The Critic as Autobiographer: Conrad Under Leonard Woolf's Eyes," in *English Literature in Transition*, 1993, v. 36, n. 3, pp. 277-285  
[see also Woolf, "Conrad's Vision: the Illumination of Romance" ed. by Stape]  
ed., *E. M. Forster: Interviews and Recollections* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: St. Martin's Press, 1993), interview with David Garnett
- Stephen, James Fitzjames (1829-1894)  
*Indian Evidence Act* (Calcutta: n.p. 1872)  
"Minute on administration of justice in India," (Calcutta: n.p., 1872)
- Stokes, Eric, *The Utilitarians in India* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1959)
- Stone, Wilfred, *The Cave and the Mountain* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1966)
- Suleri, Sara  
"The Geography of *A Passage to India*," in *E. M. Forster*, ed. by Harold Bloom (New York: Modern Critical Views, Chelsea House Publishers, 1987)  
*The Rhetoric of English India* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991)
- Swannick, H. M., "That Superiority Complex," *Foreign Affairs*, June 1927
- Symonds, Richard, *Oxford and Empire; The Last Lost Cause*, "Benares on the Isis," pp. 101-22 (London: Macmillan, 1986)
- Theweliet, Klaus, *Male Fantasies*, trans. by Erica Carter and Chris Turner (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), ch. 2: "Male Bodies: Psychoanalyzing the White Terror"
- Thompson, E. P., *Alien Homage: Edward Thompson and Rabindranath Tagore* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1993)
- Thomson, George, *The Fiction of E. M. Foster* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1967), with Appendix B, "The Manuscripts of *A Passage to India*," pp. 261-272
- Thornton, A. P., *The Imperial Ideal and its Enemies* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1966)
- Trilling, Lionel, *E. M. Forster* (New York: Hogarth Press, 1944)
- Trivedi, Harish  
ed., *The American Political Novel: Critical Essays* (New Delhi: Allied Publishers, 1984)  
"Passage or Farewell?: Politics of the Raj in E. M. Forster and E. J. Thompson," in *Colonial Transactions* (Calcutta: Papyrus, 1993)  
*Premchand: His Life and Times* (1982; Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1991)

- Introduction to E. J. Thompson *Rabindranath Tagore: Poet and Dramatist* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1991)
- Viswanathan, Gauri, *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India* (London: Faber and Faber, 1989)
- Walsh, William, *Indian Writing in English* (London: Longman Literature in English Series, 1990)
- Webb, Sidney and Beatrice, *Minority Report on the Poor Law Commission* (London: Longmans, Green, 1909)
- Werry, Richard R., "Rhythm in Forster's *A Passage to India*," in *Studies in Honor of John Wilcox*, ed. by A. D. Wallace and W. O. Ross (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1958)
- Wilde, Oscar, "The Importance of Being Earnest," ed. by Joseph Bristow (London: Routledge, 1992)
- Williams, Eric, *Capitalism and Slavery* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1944)
- Williams, Raymond (1921-1988)  
*The Country and the City* (London: Chatto and Windus for The Hogarth Press, 1973)  
*Culture and Society, 1780-1950* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983)  
*The Politics of Modernism*, ed. and intro. by Tony Pinkney (London: Verso, 1989)  
*Problems in Materialism and Culture* (London: Verso, 1980)  
Review, obituary, or article attributed back cover of Williams (1989) to Terry Eagleton in *The Observer*, 1989; I have been unable to identify the source in more detail.
- Woolf, Virginia (1882-1941)  
*Melymbrosia: An Early Version of "The Voyage Out"*, ed. and intro. by Louise DeSalvo (New York: New York Public Library, 1982)  
*Night and Day* (London: Duckworth, 1919; Hogarth Press, 1977)  
*Roger Fry* London: Hogarth Press, 1940)  
*The Voyage Out* (London: Duckworth, 1915)  
*The Voyage Out*, ed. by Elizabeth Heine (Hogarth Press, 1990)
- Wordsworth, William, (1770-1850), "Essay Supplemental" "Preface" to *Lyrical Ballads in Prose Works*, ed. by W. J. B. Owen and Jane Worthington Smyser (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), vol. 3
- Young, G. M. and W. D. Handcock, eds., *English Historical Documents*, v. 12:1, 1833-1874 (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1956)



## Bibliographical Appendix

### Studies of Indian Writing in English

- Afzal-Khan, Fawzia, *Cultural Imperialism and the Indo-English Novel: Genre and Ideology in R. K. Narayan, Anita Desai, Kamala Markandaya, and Salman Rushdie* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993)
- Aggarwal, Narindas K., compiler, *English in South Asia: A Bibliographical Survey of Resources* (Gurgaon: Indian Documentation Services, 1982)
- Alphonso-Karkala, John B., *Indo-English Literature in the Nineteenth Century* (Mysore: Literary Half-Yearly, University of Mysore, 1970)
- Amur, G. S., *Creations and Transcreations* (Calcutta: Writers Workshop, 1992)
- Anand, Mulk Raj, *Old Myth and New Myth: Letters from M. R. Anand to K. V. S. Murti* (Calcutta: Writers Workshop, 1991)
- Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (London: Routledge, 1989)
- Asvatthanarayana Reddi, G., *Indian Writing in English and its Audience* (Bareilly: Prakash Book Depot, 1979)
- Atma Ram  
*Essays on Indian English Literature* (Aurangabad: Parimal, 1984)  
 ed. *Interviews with Indians Writing in English* (Calcutta: Writers Workshop, 1992)
- Ayyappapaniker, K.  
*Indian Literature in English* (Madras: Anu Chithra Publications, 1989)  
 ed. *Indian English Literature Since Independence* (New Delhi: Indian Association for English Studies, 1991)—with bibliography
- Azim, Firdous, *The Colonial Rise of the Novel* (London: Methuen, 1993)
- Badal, R. K., *Indo-Anglian Literature: An Outline* (Bareilly: Prakash Book Depot, 1975)
- Bhatnagar, K. C., *Realism in Major Indo-English Fiction: with special reference to M. R. Anand, R. K. Narayan, and Raja Rao* (Bareilly: Prakash Book Depot, 1980)
- Bhattacharya, P. C. *Indo-Anglian Literature and the Works of Raja Rao* (Delhi: Atma Ram, 1983)
- Bose, Sujit, *Attitudes to Imperialism: Kipling, Forster, and Paul Scott* (Delhi: Amar Prakashan, 1990)

- Butcher, Maggie, ed. *The Eye of the Beholder: Indian Writing in English* (London: Commonwealth Institute, 1983)
- Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages  
*A Bibliography of Indian English* (Hyderabad: CEIFL, 1972)  
*Indian Writing in English: Papers Read at the Seminar on Indian English, Hyderabad, July, 1972* (Bombay: Orient Longman, 1978)
- Chandra, Sudhir, *The Oppressive Present: Literature and Social Consciousness in Colonial India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992)
- Crane, Ralph, *Inventing India* (London: Macmillan, 1992)
- Cronin, Richard, *Imagining India* (London: Macmillan, 1989)
- Devy, G. N.  
*After Amnesia: Tradition and Change in Indian Literary Criticism* (Bombay: Orient Longman, 1992)  
*In Another Tongue: Essays on Indian English Literature* (Frankfurt-am-Main; New York: P. Lang, 1993)  
 with S. K. Desai, eds., *Critical Thought: An Anthology of 20th Century Indian English Essays* (London: Oriental University Press, 1987)
- Dimock, Edward, et al, eds., *The Literatures of India: An Introduction* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1976)
- Dwivedi, Aman Nath, *Indian Writing in English* (Delhi: Aman Prakashan, 1991)
- Gauda, A., ed., *The Colonial and Neo-Colonial Encounter* (Mysore: Pranaranga, University of Mysore, 1983)
- Goonetilleke, D. C. R. A., *Images of the Raj: South Asia in the Literature of Empire* (London: Macmillan, 1988)
- Gopaul, B., ed., *Indian Writing in English: An Anthology* (Moka, Mauritius: Mahatma Gandhi Institute, 1983)—with bibliography
- Goyal, Bhagwat S., *Culture and Commitment: Aspects of Indian Literature in English* (Meerut: Shalabh Book House, 1984)
- Greenberger, Allen, J., *The British Image of India: A Study in the Literature of Imperialism, 1880-1960* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969)
- Gupta, Brijen Kishore, *India in English Fiction, 1800-1979: An Annotated Bibliography* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1973)—with bibliography
- Hemenway, Stephen Ignatius, *The Novel of India*, vol. 1 "The Anglo-Indian Novel", vol. 2 "The Indo-Anglian Novel" (Calcutta: Writer's Workshop, 1975)
- Howe, Susanne, *Novels of Empire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1949)

- Islam, Shamsul, *Chronicles of the Raj: A Study of Literary Reaction to the Imperial Idea towards the End of the Raj* (London: Macmillan, 1979)
- Jain, Sushil Kumar, *Indian Literature in English: A Bibliography* (Windsor, Ont.: Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies, 1972)
- Joshi, Krishna Nand and B. Syamala Rao, *Studies in Indo-Anglian Literature* (Bareilly: Prakash Book Depot, 1972)—with bibliography
- Joshi, Svati, ed., *Rethinking English: Essays in Literature, Language, and History*, papers from the Seminars on English Studies in India at University of Delhi (New Delhi: Trianka, 1991)
- Journal of Indian Writing in English*, from Jan. 1973—present (published by G. S. Balarama Gupta)
- Jussawalla, Feroza, *Family Quarrels: Towards a Criticism of Indian Writing in English* (New York: P. Lang, 1985)—with bibliography
- Kalininkova, Elena, *Indian-English Literature: A Perspective*, ed. by K. K. Sharma, trans. by Virnedra Pal Sharma (Ghaziabad: Vimal Prakashan, 1982)
- Karkala, John A. and Leena, *Bibliography of Indo-Anglian Literature: A Checklist of Works by Indian Authors in English, 1880-1966* (Bombay: Nirmala Sadanand Publishers, 1974)
- Kirpal, Viney, ed. *The New Indian English Novel* (Bombay: Allied Publishers, 1990)
- Lal, P. *The Alien Insiders: Essays on Indian Writing in English* (Calcutta: Writers Workshop, 1987)
- Malhotra, Madan Lal, *Bridges of Literature: 23 Critical Essays* (Ajmer: Sunanda Publications, 1971)
- McCutchion, David, *Indian Writing in English* (Calcutta: Writers Workshop, 1969)
- Melwani, Murli Das, *Critical Essays on Indo-Anglian Themes* (Calcutta: Writers Workshop, 1971)
- Mishra, Udayon, *The Raj in Fiction: A Study of Nineteenth-Century British Attitudes towards India* (Delhi: B. R. Publishing Corporation, 1987)
- Mokashi-Punekar, Shankar, *Theoretical and Practical Studies in Indo-English Literature* (Dharwar: Karnatak University, 1978)
- Mukherjee, Meenakshi  
*Realism And Reality: The Novel and Society in India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1985)  
 ed., *Considerations* (Bombay: Allied Publishers, 1977)
- Mukherjee, Sujit, *Forster and Further: The Tradition of Anglo-Indian Fiction* (Bombay: Orient Longman, 1993)

- Nagarajan, M. S., N. Eakambaram, and A. Natarajan, eds., *Essays in Criticism on Indian Literature in English* (New Delhi: S. Chand and Co., 1991)
- Narayan, Gamathi, *The Sahibs and the Natives: A Study of Guilt and Pride in Anglo-Indian and Indo-Anglian Novels* (Delhi: Chanakya Publications, 1986)
- Naik, M. K.  
*A History of Indian English Literature* (New Delhi: Sahatiya Akademi, 1982)  
*Studies in Indian English Literature* (Delhi: Sterling Publishers Private, 1987)  
*Mirror on the Wall: Images of India and the Englishman in Anglo-Indian Fiction* (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1991)  
 ed., *Aspects of Indian Writing in English: Essays in Honour of Professor S. K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar* (Madras: Macmillan, 1979)  
 ed., *Perspectives on Indian Fiction in English* (Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1985)  
 with S. K. Desai, and G. S. Amur, eds., *Critical Essays on Indian Writing in English: Presented to Armando Menezes* (Dharwar: Karnatak University Press, 1968)
- Naqvi, Rafiq Ahmed, *Indian Response to Literature in English: British, American, and Indo-Anglian* (Gurgaon: Indian Documentation Services, 1974)
- Narasimhaiah, C. D., *Moving Frontiers of English Studies in India* (New Delhi: S. Chand and Co., 1971)
- Narasimhan, Raji, *Sensibility Under Stress: Aspects of Indo-English Fiction* (New Delhi: Ashajanak Publications, 1976)
- Nelson, Emmanuel S.  
 ed, *Writers of the Indian Diaspora: A Bio-Bibliographical Sourcebook* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1993)  
*Reworlding: The Literature of the Indian Diaspora* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1992)
- Pathan, B. A., *Gandhain [sic] Myth in English Literature* (New Delhi: Deep and Deep, 1987)
- Parry, Benita, *Delusions and Discoveries: Studies on India and the British Imagination* (London: Allen Lane The Penguin Press, 1972)
- Peterson, Kirsten Holst and Anna Rutherford, eds., *A Double Colonization: Colonial and Post-Colonial Women's Writing* (Mundelstrup, Denmark: Dungaroo Press, 1986)
- Raghavacharyulu, Dhupaty V. K.  
*The Critical Response: Selected Essays on the American, Commonwealth, Indian, and British Traditions in Literature* (Madras: Macmillan, 1980)  
 ed., *The Two-Fold Voice: Essays in Indian Writing in English* (Vijayamada: Navodaya Publishers, 1971)
- Rajan, Rajeswari Sunder, ed. *The Lie of the Land: English Literary Studies in India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1993)

- Raju, Anand Kumar and C. R. Sunder Raj, *Indian Writing in English: A Concise Bibliography of Secondary Sources* (Bombay: Ivon Publishing House, 1981)
- Ramakrishna, Devarakonda, *Close Encounters with the Muse: Essays and Letters on Indian Writing in English* (Eluru, West Godavari Dt., Andhra Pradesh: D. A. Krishna Kumar, 1986)
- Ray, David and Amritji Singh, eds. *India: an Anthology of Contemporary Writing* (Chicago; Athens, Ohio: Swallow Press, Ohio University Press, 1983)
- Ridley, Hugh, *Images of Imperial Rule* (London: Croom Helm, 1983)
- Rubin, David, *After the Raj: British Novels of India since 1947* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1986)
- Shanker, Laxmi, and S. Hamid Husain, eds., *National Register of Doctoral Dissertations Accepted and in Progress in Social Sciences and Humanities in Indian Universities*, v. 1-English literature (Bhopal: Publications Division, Council of Oriental Research, 1979—present)
- Sharma, K. K., ed. *Indian English Literature* (Ghaziabad: Vimal Prakashan, 1977)
- Singh, Amrit, Ragiva Verma, Irene M. Joshi, *Indian Literature in English, 1827-1979: a Guide to Information Services* (Detroit, MI: Gale Research Co., 1981)
- Singh, Bhupal, *A Survey of Anglo-Indian Fiction* (London: Curzon Press, 1974; London: Oxford University Press, 1934)
- Singh, Charu Sheel, ed., *Confederate Gestures: Search for Method in Indian Literary Studies* (New Delhi: Associated Publications House, 1993)
- Singh, Rashna B., *The Imperishable Empire: A Study of British Fiction on India* (Washington, DC: Three Crowns Press, 1988)
- Singh, R. K., ed., *Indian English Writing, 1981-1985: Experiments with Expression* (New Delhi: Bahri Publications, 1987)
- Sinha, Krishna Nandar, ed., *Indian Writing in English* (New Delhi: Heritage, 1979)
- Srinivas Iyengar, K. R.  
ed. and intro., *Indian Literature Since Independence: A Symposium* (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1973)—with bibliographies  
*Sri Aurobindo* (Calcutta: Arya Publishing House, 1945)
- Srivastava, Avadhesh K., ed., *Alien Voice: Perspectives on Commonwealth Literature* (Lucknow: Print House, 1983)—with bibliographies
- Subha Rao, T. V., *Indian Writing in English: Is there any worth in it?* (Madurai: Koodal Publishers, 1976)
- Suleri, Sara, *The Rhetoric of English India* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1992)



Sunath, C. N. *The Literary Landscape: Essays on Indian Fiction and Poetry in English* (Delhi: Mittal Publications, 1986)

Surayanarayana, K. V., *Kohinoor in the Crown: Critical Studies in Indian English Literature* (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1987)

Tharu, Susie, and K. Lalita, eds., *Women's Writing in India: 600 BC to the Present* (New York: Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 1990-1993)

*The Indian Literary Review*, from May 1978—present (New Delhi)

Verghese, C. Paul  
*Problems of the Indian Creative Writer in English* (Bombay: Somaiya Publications, 1971)  
*Essays on Indian Writing in English* (New Delhi: N. V. Publications, 1975)

Verma, C. D., *The Exile-Hero and the Reintegrating Vision in Indian English Fiction* (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1991)

Viswanathan, Gauri, *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India* (London: Faber and Faber, 1990; New York: Columbia University Press, 1989)

Walsh, William, *Indian Writing in English* (London: Longman Literature in English Series, 1990)

Williams, Hayden Moore, ed., *Galaxy of Indian Writing in English* (Delhi: Akshat Publications, 1987)

Williams, Hayden Moore, *Indo-Anglian Literature, 1800-1970: A Survey* (Madras: Orient Longman, 1976)—with bibliography